

**BACKGROUND**




commission of the churches on international affairs

1990/1

**INFORMATION**

# Peace and the Reuni- fication of Korea





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# Peace and the Reuni- fication of Korea



Commission of the Churches on International Affairs  
World Council of Churches  
1990

# Peace and the Euni- tica- tion of Korea



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## DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

With the sweeping changes in the socialist societies of Eastern and Central Europe, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the cold war — at least in Europe — it is only natural to expect that there will be relaxation in tension and moves towards peace in the Korean peninsula. However, there are still no clear signs of change in the region though there may be developments which have not yet been fully known. Unfortunately there has been intensification of tension in the peninsula during the annual US-South Korea joint military operations.

Parallels are sometimes drawn between German reunification and possible reunification of Korea. There is no denying that the case for Korean reunification is even more strong than that for German reunification. However, the comparisons between the two are valid only upto a point. In the final stages towards German reunification the timing, pace and the manner of reunification have been virtually dictated by West Germany, with no chance given to East Germany to find its feet and affirm its identity after the collapse of the Communist regime there. The political, economic and security issues raised by the reunification of Germany will be with Europe for a long time to come.

The Korean situation has no parallel. It is a unique situation. As the Central Committee's Policy Statement said :

“The immense tragedy of the division of Korea is still little known. The disproportionate human cost paid by the Korean people for the cold war and geopolitics is little known. The continuing agony of the separation of millions is still known. The potential for escalation of the conflict even to a nuclear conflagration is little known.”

The two powers, the USA and the USSR are directly responsible for the division of Korea. At this time when the cold war has ended it is only appropriate that they take initiative to remove the external obstacles to Korean reunification. It is always emphasized that it is the people of Korea who have to be the ultimate subjects in decisions on reunification. But both the USA and the USSR which imposed the division on the people of Korea in the first place are duty bound to create the climate for negotiations.

So far Korean peninsula has not received any priority on the superpower summit agenda. The pre-occupation at present is with Europe. Disarmament and demilitarization are for Europe. New security perceptions are also for Europe. There is still no evidence of any real attempt to extend such initiatives to the Korean peninsula.

It is true that the Korean peninsula receives much attention from Moscow these days. One however gets the impression that it is the economic aspect that is given importance. Korean peninsula is estimated high for the economic development of the Asian part of the Soviet Union. This is understandable and justifiable. But it is even more important to look at the political issues of the region.

Taking advantage of the reforms in the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe, South Korea is moving in a big way to build economic relations with those

countries there. This definitely has several advantages and may also contribute to a better political climate. It will also provide new channels of communication which can be useful for negotiations. However, in the short-term period this has only re-enforced the isolation of North Korea.

All efforts have to be made to reduce the isolation of North Korea. It is not denied that the isolation is partly self-imposed. But the isolation is also the result of perceptions about North Korea from the time of the Korean war. It is now known that some of the perceptions were due to disinformation and misunderstanding. The international community therefore has a responsibility to look at this chapter of history once again. The United Nations has an important role here.

As the Policy Statement points out :

“A fresh truly impartial initiative should be launched by the United Nations in an effort to rectify its historical legacy of bias and complicity in Korea’s division. Serious consideration should be given to the proposal that the United Nations Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea oversee a mutual troop reduction by North and South Korea.”

In the context of steps for nuclear disarmament by the USA and the USSR, the USA should remove immediately all nuclear weapons from Korean soil. This will make an important contribution to the reduction of tensions and will be a sign of good faith. Both the USA and the USSR should be urged also to remove all nuclear weapons aimed at Korea. This would open the way for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Korea.

This issue of the “Background Information” updates the story of the involvement of the churches in Korea and the CCIA in the processes supporting efforts for peace and the reunification of Korea. The “Tozanso Story” will have an important place in ecumenical history but one hopes also at least a modest place in the history of the Korean people. It has been a most enriching experience for all those associated with it. The lessons it gives on peace-making and unity of the churches and of people have yet to be clearly drawn.

The WCC Convocation of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation at Seoul in March 1990 became an occasion for the ecumenical community to reaffirm its support for the peace and the reunification of Korea. There were hopes that there will be participants from North Korea at the Convocation. Unfortunately these hopes were not realized.

The CCIA assumes the responsibility for maintaining contacts between the churches in South Korea and those in the North as long as direct contacts between them are not possible. It will continue to act as a channel of communication between the two Christian communities. It will also seek the support and cooperation of member churches who may be in a position to assist the process. As the Policy Statement concludes :

“The Korean division is in microcosm a symbol of the division of the world. If this wound in the human community can be healed, there would emanate from Korea a hope for all humanity. We pray that the cross of the Korean people can lead to an Easter for us all.”

Geneva, April 1990

*Ninan Koshy*  
*Director*



# THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND THE REUNIFICATION OF KOREA

*Monique McClellan*

“In terms of Korea, the historic importance of the Moscow Central Committee was not just that it adopted the first international policy statement on reunification of that country after 43 years of division”, says Ninan Koshy. “The fact that in Moscow for the first time church representatives from North and South Korea attended the same large ecumenical conference with the knowledge and approval of their governments was a remarkable achievement.”

The statement “Peace and the Reunification of Korea” as it was issued by the governing body of the WCC is a far cry from a statement adopted by its predecessors in 1950. With regard to the conflict in Korea and the resulting division, the Central Committee then subscribed to the views of the United Nations Commission there, who asserted that “all evidence points to a calculated, coordinated attack prepared and launched with secrecy” by the North Korean troops.

In retrospect Ninan Koshy notes that when one looks at the United Nations’ role in Korea then, on the basis of evidence available today, the UN role was dubious. He thinks that is possibly a reason why it has been found convenient not to deal with the issue of Korea’s division within that body, and why the international community has largely continued to ignore it. The consequences of the division and the cost of human suffering in terms of the separation of millions of families have not been considered with sufficient seriousness by the world community. Koshy regrets the consequences : “On international issues, the perception and the mind of people around the world are created largely by western media and the United Nations. Holding the North as solely responsible for what happened was not entirely correct, but it has not been easy to change that perception.” The fact that the WCC at that time accepted the UN position was also conditioned by the particular Cold War period. In fact, it led directly to the resignation of the WCC president from China, T.C. Chao, and the eventual withdrawal of the Chinese churches from the activities of the WCC.

## **REAPPRAISAL OF WCC POLICY**

When the WCC decided to take another and more objective look at the Korean problem a few decades later, this was also closely linked to rebuilding relations with the Chinese churches and the People’s Republic of China.

The 1989 policy statement on "Peace and the Reunification of Korea" results from a process of many years of preparation — sometimes in public, sometimes quietly, but never without the knowledge of church partners or governments in both North and South. With down-to-earth recommendations it is also a confession that the churches who belong to the ecumenical movement have not always dealt equitably with the Korean question — and it urges all Christians to intensify the struggle for peace and support the reunification of Korea.

As a policy statement it includes eight priority considerations to assist member churches and related agencies to initiate or redouble efforts so that they can persuade their respective governments to review Korea policies. The various governments should be encouraged to follow the objectives of peace, justice and eventually help to bring about the reunification of that country.

The recommendations to churches include, among others, that the people of Korea should be the ultimate subjects in decisions affecting their future, without outside interference. The USA, USSR, Japan and China should be pressed to state their intentions clearly to pursue the reunification of Korea as a matter of national policy. The reunification process should respect and recognize the reality of the two existing autonomous systems in the spirit of peaceful coexistence, while building up one unified country. A radical reduction of military forces, facilities, and weapons should be sought on the Korean peninsula in order to eliminate one of the major threats to regional and world peace.

## **THE DIVISION — A THREAT**

The World Council statement also acknowledges that the division of Korea and the resulting implications have been widely underestimated. It refers to the biblical passage in Ephesians 2:14-16, where the dividing wall of hostility is broken down, as a reflection of the hopes and promise for the long-suffering Korean people. And as a confession of guilt the World Council's member churches acknowledge: "We confess that we have not always dealt equitably with the Korean question. Mistakes of the past should weigh on the conscience of the ecumenical community and intensify our determination to struggle for peace and the reunification of Korea." The fact that more than three hundred member churches of the World Council are challenged to be behind that confession has not been lost on Koreans.

But in the meantime, in view of the churches' world-wide movement towards peace, justice and the integrity of creation Korea's division is a special challenge. Opposing conceptions of justice have been created and systematized there, and under the code word "security" a continual state of confrontation remains imposed. The largest concentration of military force in the world is focussed on the Korean peninsula. Korea remains technically at war.

As far as the question of reunification is concerned, Ninan Koshy calls attention to the fact that until recently it was illegal even to discuss it in public in Korea. Although the National Council of Churches of Korea (NCCCK) defied the restrictions in many ways, it was difficult to have a full representation of Korean churches when the issue was discussed at ecumenical meetings.

There remains a section in some of the churches in South Korea which is opposed to any discussion of reunification because of their strong anti-communist stance. Still, says Ninan Koshy, in the process of preparation of the WCC statement it was eventually possible to get official support of all the member churches of the WCC and the NCKK. He says that Korean churches now are fully behind the statement; but it took almost seven years to prepare. Yet, one might add, considering the complicated political and social implications at the international level, this is not a bad record.

Of course North Korean Christians were involved fully in the preparation process as well. When the international affairs commission organized a consultation on peace and justice in North-East Asia Tozanso near Tokyo in 1984, North Koreans had not been able to attend, but had sent a message through the Korean Christians Federation. In it they expressed their belief that the conference “will make every effort to realize peace and justice in this region, particularly peaceful reunification of Korea..”

“It was not easy to deal with that communication then”, says Ninan Koshy. “Because at the time, some might have said that there is no church in North Korea, that there are no Christians there, that there is a Christian Federation which is really a government front..”

Still, it was the Tozanso consultation which authorized the WCC to begin contacts with the Korean Christians Federation and several ecumenical church visits were arranged. And then, what had seemed impossible for so many years became a reality in 1986 in Glion, Switzerland. Under the auspices of the World Council, North Korean and South Korean Christians met for the first time, since the division of their country, and celebrated a communion service.

At the 1988 Central Committee in Hanover (FRG) when the CCIA reported on the preliminary work it had done to promote the question of reunification, the committee requested a policy statement. Later that year, again in Glion, a second meeting between representatives of the churches in the South and the Christian community in the North was organized by the CCIA. The first declaration on reunification supported by both Korean counterparts was drawn up then. This provided the basis for much discussion, during the remaining months, — substantially between churches in South Korea — leading up to the July Moscow Central Committee.

And finally, a fairly well negotiated draft document was the result of the international affairs commission encouraging consultations between Christians in South and North Korea, among churches in the South, and with other member churches of the WCC.

## **HIGHLIGHT IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT**

Two Central Committee members from South Korea, as well as two representatives from the North Korean Christians Federation and a few other South Korean participants participated in the Moscow meeting. In addressing the Central Committee, Ko Gi Jun from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, who has been the general secretary of the Korean Christians Federation for 16 years, thanked the WCC for the efforts on behalf of the Korean issue during past years. Pleading for the adoption of the statement on Korea he said that reunification and reconciliation was the wish of Christians in North Korea : “My joy at this moment is based on that desire and on our

common efforts so far. Please be assured that we Koreans will work on this further and continuously. At the same time we recognize fully the international cooperation, and being together in this internationally is highly appreciated.’

It was then the turn of a representative of the churches in the Republic of Korea, Kim Yung Tae from the Presbyterian Church of Korea, to add his words of thanks on behalf of South Korean member churches of the WCC. He chaired the committee on reunification at the National Council of Churches in Korea : ‘‘I feel honoured to speak here at the moment when such a historic document is to be adopted. Next year the World Council is coming to Seoul for a meeting on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation : we are very clear that this event is closely related to the issue of reunification of our country. We all know that sixty million Koreans on both sides are always praying for reunification.’’

The Central Committee delegates and participants greeted their words with applause and emotion — and spontaneously sang ‘‘Laudate Omnes Gentes’’, an ecumenical hymn. The policy statement on reunification then passed with all delegates voting in favour. Ninan Koshy told the Central Committee that for many of those involved in this process, in support of the efforts of the churches in Korea, this has been one of the most enriching experiences in the ecumenical movement.

## **LOW VISIBILITY**

He points out the significance of the process leading up to this vote : ‘‘This part of our work is perhaps not the most publicized activity of the WCC. At the time of the second Glion meeting in 1988 we were not at all keen on publicity, despite the importance of the event. And in 1986, when we brought Koreans together for the first time, this was illegal according to laws of the two governments. Yet because our participants needed some kind of acquiescence from their governments, and we had negotiated this, they knew what we were doing and what we were saying.’’

‘‘So we were more interested in preserving the process by being less visible, as a high visibility would have provoked questions. And in terms of the significance of the process this is one of the important initiatives of the WCC after the Vancouver Assembly. It was not just the content of the statement that resulted from years of preparation, but the fact of bringing churches and Christians of both Koreas together.’’

As far meeting together in Moscow, it would not have been possible for South Koreans even to visit Moscow until a few years ago. During an official government reception for Central Committee members in the Kremlin, the Soviet Prime Minister, N.I. Ryzhkov had a spontaneous conversation with Korean representatives. ‘‘He became really interested’’, says Koshy, ‘‘and spoke to them at length. Pastor Ko Gi Jun from North Korea could speak Russian, which made it easier to have a discussion. Ryzhkov had not known about this process of the churches towards reunification, and he expressed his personal interest and the interest of the Soviet Union in the issue.’’ Pastor Ko appealed to him to help and Ryzhkov promised to do his best.

## **NEW SOVIET POLICY IN ASIA**

Ninan Koshy feels that the official position of the Soviet Union is definitely to encourage the reunification process. In the context of *perestroika* a fairly new policy on

the whole Asian region has also developed, with important roles played by South Korea and Japan. On the other hand South Korea is now trying to promote direct relationships with the Soviet Union, as already expressed through some new trade agreements. Internationally, so far the Soviet Union had been seen as a supporter of North Korea only. At this point it is not possible to predict the influence of *perestroika* on North Korea itself.

“But”, says Koshy, “as far as the Christians and churches in socialist countries are concerned, we hope that under *perestroika* some of them will have an important role in the process that the WCC has initiated. We already see a greater role for the Russian Orthodox Church. And in the past we have taken advantage of the contacts that the Chinese churches have with North Korean Christians.’

Regarding the continued work towards reunification of Korea, the immediate focus of the WCC will be on promoting direct contacts between churches in the South and the Christian community in the North, and to assist Christians in the North to expand their ecumenical contacts. Ninan Koshy feels that the CCIA can help to promote the Korean question in international fora such as the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies. He says that even the Non-Aligned Movement has not really given much importance to it.

# THE TOZANSO PROCESS

## An Ecumenical Contribution to the Struggle for Peace and Justice in North-East Asia

*Erich Weingartner*

### INTRODUCTION

By the time of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, Canada, in the Summer of 1983, it was no longer possible simply to reaffirm the responsibility of churches and the ecumenical movement for justice and peace. There was no disagreement that peace and justice are legitimate goals for Christians, but there was a new awareness of the fact that these goals are not without internal conflicts.

For Europeans and North Americans, a number of events and trends underlined the tenuous nature of peace in the North Atlantic : the increase of tensions between the superpowers, the deployment of new nuclear weapon systems in Europe, talk of the possibility of "limited nuclear war" and new discoveries relating to the consequences of nuclear war — what came to be known as "nuclear winter".

They had also been shocked when war broke out between two supposedly "friendly" countries, the United Kingdom and Argentina, over the Malvinas/Falklands Islands. In this surprisingly ferocious war, the two adversaries used sophisticated new weaponry produced by countries of the same military alliance.

For the churches in the North, the East-West conflict was assuming such frightening dimensions that the *peace issue* seemed the most urgent priority, on which hinged the survival and future of planet earth.

Fears about an impending Armageddon seemed rather academic to delegates coming from countries where death in both violent and insidious forms is the daily lot of millions. The economic crisis had widened the chasm between rich and poor, producing increasing numbers of victims of unemployment, inflation and debt, making a mockery even of the word "development". The continued exploitation of resources throughout the world by the North served to reinforce structures of repression in the South at a rate

and level never before experienced. For churches in the South, the North-South conflict was assuming proportions which left no alternative except to consider the *justice issue* as the overriding concern of the times. Without justice, what is the meaning of peace ?

In practically all the public issues dealt with at Vancouver, justice and peace were found to be tightly interwoven. This was obvious in the regional and national situations on which statements and resolutions were passed, such as the Middle East, Southern Africa, Central America, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Lesotho. The resolution on the Pacific highlighted the issue of independence, a justice issue, and the nuclear question, a peace issue.

But even the statements on the International Food Disorder and on Human Rights cannot be seen solely from the point of view of justice. Food has been used as a political weapon, as the statement pointed out, in ongoing wars that claim millions of lives. In discussions on human rights, the question was asked whether it is legitimate to go to war for the sake of the realization of human rights, or conversely, whether the violation of human rights should be condoned for the sake of keeping the peace.

These difficult questions cannot be answered by a glib reference to rigid ethical codes. Answers of the past, when both injustice and warfare were technologically and geographically more limited, may no longer apply in a world where systems of exploitation have become global and where the destructive capacity of weapons has surpassed rational human control. Vancouver recognized that here are new challenges that face Christians at the very core of their faith. There is a need to return to the biblical witness, a need for intensive theological reflection, a need for a sober discernment of God's will for us today and a need for the Christian church to submit to that will in a covenant relationship for peace and justice.

In its *Statement on Peace and Justice*, the Sixth WCC Assembly affirmed that there can be no peace without justice :

*“The peoples of the world stand in need of peace and justice. Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace cannot be built on foundations of injustice. Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all nations, and respect for the God-given humanity and dignity of every person. Peace is, as the Prophet Isaiah has taught us, the effect of righteousness.*

*“The churches today are called to confess anew their faith, and to repent for the times when Christians have remained silent in the face of injustice and threats to peace. The biblical vision of peace with justice for all, of wholeness, of unity for all God's people, is not one of several options for the followers of Christ. It is an imperative of our time.*

*“The ecumenical approach to peace and justice is based on the belief that without justice for all everywhere, we shall never have peace anywhere.”*

## **THE CASE OF KOREA**

There can be no better example of the interrelationship between peace and justice than the case of Korea. Tragically, it is a negative example. The Korean people were divided and remain divided by force, an injustice in itself, but they have also been submitted to coercive systems of control which perpetuate this division and are justified by it. The perversion of the Korean peninsula is that opposing conceptions of justice

have been created and systematized in the two halves of Korea, whose security necessitates a continual state of readiness for war. A so-called “peace” is maintained at the cost of the largest concentration of military force in the world. Peculiar notions of justice are maintained at the cost of the right of the Korean people to decide their own destiny. In reality, Korea technically remains at war, and so long as millions of families remain divided, there can be no claim that justice has been achieved.

The ecumenical movement has a long history in relation to Korea, not all of it completely unambiguous. Early efforts to bring peace to Korea played into the hands of those determined to keep Korea divided. Later efforts to support the struggle for human rights and democratization in the southern half of Korea underestimated the dictatorial power generated by insecurity and fear of an external, almost invisible enemy.

There has been a growing awareness that the division of Korea is serving as a justification for dictatorship and that therefore the struggle for peace and unification is an integral component of the struggle for justice and democratization.

The truth of this realization became apparent when churches in the Republic of Korea began to put Korean unification on the agenda of their activities. Plans by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and by member churches of the WCC in Korea were repeatedly frustrated due to pressures from the government. People were arrested and charged with crimes for having studied from a Christian perspective the official positions of the Governments of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

## **THE TOZANSO CONSULTATION**

This difficulty of the Korean churches to deal openly with a question so crucial for the future of their people prompted the WCC’s Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) to explore the possibility of holding an international consultation on the subject. After intensive consultations with WCC member churches, the NCCCK and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), the CCIA organized a consultation on the subject “Peace and Justice in North-East Asia : Prospects for Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts”.

In preparation for that consultation, the staff of the CCIA visited South Korea more than once for consultations with the NCCCK, representatives of WCC member churches and government officials. At the same time, consultations were held in Geneva with diplomatic representatives of both the ROK and the DPRK. It was made clear from the outset that the question of the unification of Korea would be a major topic at this meeting, and that the WCC desired to make available to participants the official positions of the two Korean governments, as well as those of the USA, the USSR, China and Japan. These governments were invited to provide such information in written form. Indirect communication was established also with the Korean Christians Federation (KCF) of North Korea, which was invited to send participants, as was the China Christian Council in the People’s Republic of China.

In this way, all the parties involved, both church and government, were fully informed and invited to make their contribution to the consultation. The timing of the consultation coincided with official visits by the then WCC General Secretary Dr. Philip Potter and CCIA Director Mr. Ninan Koshy to the Republic of Korea and the People’s



Republic of China, where they held conversations with church leaders on the topic of the consultation. Although the Chinese Christians were not represented at the meeting, their input and perspectives were communicated to the consultation participants by Dr. Potter and Mr. Koshy. Though the KCF of North Korea was not able to take part, they sent a message of greetings and encouragement.

From 28 October to 2 November 1984, sixty-five participants, church leaders from every part of the globe, East, West, North and South, came together at the YMCA Conference Center in Tozanso, near Tokyo, Japan. The WCC member churches and National Councils of Churches of Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Philippines, as well as the leadership of the Christian Conference of Asia were represented and participated actively.

## **TOZANSO CONCLUSIONS**

The ‘‘Findings and Recommendations’’ of the Consultation have proved to furnish a major breakthrough in discussions on peace and justice in North-East Asia, particularly the recommendations concerning the Korean peninsula. In view of their dramatic consequences, the following highlights deserve closer attention :

1. Peace and justice in North-East Asia is a concern and responsibility of the whole ecumenical family. This is all the more true because the issues are not merely local in scope. They have been caused, aggravated and continue to be influenced by outside forces. Solutions to the grave problems of peace and justice in that region will have to take into account regional and global relationships.
2. At the heart of the conflicts is the divided Korean peninsula. It has remained one of the most abrasive points on the dividing line between the world’s two major ideological and military blocs and is rapidly becoming the most unstable, considering the large number of nuclear weapons on its soil and in its neighbourhood.
3. The issue of Korean unification is above all a matter for the people of Korea themselves to decide. What the ecumenical community can contribute is solidarity, prayer and sustenance for those Koreans who are struggling for justice and peace.
4. Tozanso recognized a strong ideological component in the conflict, which distorts perceptions and contributes to a displacement of priorities. In a section entitled ‘‘Overcoming Enemy Images’’, the report states that ‘‘particular attention needs to be given in this region to overcoming stereotypes, prejudice, imposed enemy images, inflammatory anti-imperialistic rhetoric and facile anti-communism which do not recognize the humanity of the opposing side.’’
5. On the basis of the previous assumptions, Tozanso considered that the time was ripe for the ecumenical family of churches to take up direct contact with the DPRK.

Anyone who has followed the growth and development of the Korean church will realize that this last, simply-worded recommendation is far from self-evident. Doubts about the authenticity of Christian groups in North Korea among Christians in the South and abroad are very great.

It was in an international ecumenical context where a major breakthrough on this question became possible. Representatives of churches in the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union shared with representatives of the Korean churches their own experience of isolation from the worldwide Christian com-

munity. They spoke of the indignities they had suffered from Christians abroad at the very time when they were struggling most courageously to protect the integrity of the faith and the continuity of the church under sometimes extreme ideological and political pressures, or even open persecution. They pleaded with the churches of South Korea to believe the theological affirmation that if God is the sovereign Lord of all history, he will leave no people without witness. South Koreans should therefore not be too quick to judge those in North Korea who call themselves Christian.

The Tozanso report consequently stated the following :

*“Those few Christians it has been possible to contact in North Korea share the aspiration for unification. Though it may be some time before dialogue with the broader Christian community there can take place, we believe the prayers they offer daily resonate with those of other Korean Christians from whom they have long been separated. This too is a sign of hope, as is the willingness of representatives of the two governments of Korea to discuss matters related to unification with representatives of the WCC.”*

The recommendation regarding North Korean contacts has three components :

The first is for the WCC to explore, in collaboration with the CCA, the possibility of developing relationships with churches, Christians and others in North Korea, through visits and other forms of contact.

The second is that the WCC, in collaboration with the CCA, should seek to facilitate opportunities where it would be possible for Christians from both North and South Korea to meet in dialogue. Finally, the churches should be encouraged to share with the WCC and the CCA plans for contacts with and the results of visits to North Korea.

This final point was deemed important because behind it was the wish that such contacts should be coordinated among the ecumenical family of churches, so as to assure that the signals being communicated to both Korean governments reflect the broad ecumenical consensus arrived at in Tozanso. The enemies of peace and justice, it was felt, would fear an effective Christian witness in this respect and would seek opportunities to destroy or coopt ecumenical efforts. It is therefore imperative that the churches pool their resources and coordinate strategies in defence of peace and justice.

At the conclusion of the Tozanso meeting, a pledge was made by participants to ensure adequate follow-up :

*“We conclude this Consultation confessing our failure to become agents of reconciliation, our tendency to claim that God is on our side alone, our lack of patience, hope and trust in God’s love and dominion over history.*

*“May God bless the work we have committed ourselves to do and guide us as we seek to involve the people of God in all our countries in the search for justice, whose promised fruit is peace.”*

## **HISTORICAL VISIT TO THE DPRK**

It was gratifying to observe how rapidly churches responded to the challenges posed by Tozanso. By and large, churches outside Korea have shown the required discipline of coordination and sharing after Tozanso, being willing to time their own initiatives

according to an agreed ecumenical timetable. This discipline, has been noted and respected by the parties in the conflict, and has alerted them to how seriously the ecumenical family takes its responsibilities.

Following Dr. Potter's visit to Nanjing prior to the Tozanso Consultation, the China Christian Council invited representatives of the KCF to visit China. In May 1985, a three-person delegation made such a visit. The same delegation also visited the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow, immediately following their visit to China. In July 1985, for the first time in over 10 years, a delegation representing the Central Committee of the KCF took part in the Assembly of the Christian Peace Conference in Prague, Czechoslovakia.

The first visit ever by a World Council of Churches delegation to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea took place one year later. An invitation, dated Pyongyang, 30 May 1985, reached Geneva, personally addressed to Director Ninan Koshy and Executive Secretary Erich Weingartner of the CCIA. It was signed jointly by the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland and the Central Committee of the KCF. The letter paid tribute to the Tozanso Consultation. It stated the two organizations' encouragement about the decision to investigate the question of the reunification of Korea, seen as the "number one problem confronting all of the Korean people."

The letter further stated : "We agree with the consultation that knowledge of the true conditions of the realities of Korea and the question of Korea must be made available to all the peace-loving peoples the world over." The invitation hoped to serve as a first step in this direction.

In our letter of acceptance, we reiterated our purpose in wishing to visit the DPRK. Before departing for North Korea, we re-stated the WCC's intentions in a press release :

*"There is a dual fact-finding purpose involved, related to the two inviting organizations. The first is to discover as much detailed information as possible about the Christian community which has remained in North Korea after the Korean war, during which most Christians fled to the South. The second is to converse with government leaders regarding the issue of the peaceful reunification of Korea and the possible role that ecumenical organizations could play in the reduction of tensions on the Korean peninsula, one of the most militarized areas on the earth. In particular, the question of direct contacts and communication at a people-to-people level between North and South should be explored. The ecumenical community of churches may be in a position to play a modest role in this regard."*

The visit itself took place from 11 to 19 November 1985. Mr. Koshy and I travelled via Moscow in order to benefit from discussions with leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church, who reported to us the results of the visit they had received from the KCF delegation.

Our itinerary in North Korea consisted of a great deal of sightseeing, in particular places and monuments honouring President KIM Il Sung. The most significant in this regard was an overnight excursion to the city of Kaesong, which included a pilgrimage to Panmunjon, the village where the Armistice Agreement was signed between the USA and North Korea in July 1953. It is also the closest point of contact between North and

South along the Military Demarcation Line, where numerous North-South dialogues have taken place.

An unexpected bonus on this trip was a look at a section of the reinforced concrete wall built by the USA within the southern half of the Demilitarized Zone between 1976 and 1979. Reportedly, this barrier is 10 metres thick at the base, 5 to 8 metres high and stretches for 240 km across the entire Korean peninsula. With 4.5 metre wide steel doors strategically placed along its length, the wall is an ideal launching base for a northward invasion, so we were told.

During the mornings each day, our hosts introduced us to a variety of officials who helped us to understand the basis of North Korean attitudes and positions regarding social, economic and political development, as well as the principles guiding their proposals on Korean unification.

At each new encounter, we underlined the nature and purpose of our visit, explaining how our presence differed from that of previous Christian visitors. Since we represented the largest international church organization, with over 300 member churches in over 100 countries, an estimated constituency of some 400 million believers, we did not come to the DPRK in a private capacity. Our connection with the churches in South Korea gave our presence its unique significance. It is *their* desire for peace and justice on the Korean peninsula, *their* wish to be reunited with their families and fellow Koreans, *their* prayers for a peaceful reunification of Korea which had brought us to this country. The result of our visit would be shared with all our member churches, first and foremost our member churches in Korea. Our hope was that we might be the forerunners of what could ultimately be a direct contact among ordinary Koreans of North and South.

We had ample opportunity to learn about the “Juche idea”, based on the principles of political independence and economic self-reliance, the underlying ideology of the DPRK. Though North Korea has received assistance from both China and the Soviet Union, we were told, it has retained its full self-reliant economy and hosts no foreign forces on its soil.

When we asked about the place of religion in a society based on the Juche idea, we were told that religion and Juche share some common features. Both advocate the destiny of man. Religion came into being to deliver poor people from misery. This is why in North Korea many “religionists” support the Juche idea. The new trend called “liberation theology”, which holds that religion must participate in the changing of society, comes close to, but nevertheless differs from Juche in the sense that the latter relies exclusively on human efforts. The DPRK constitution guarantees full freedom of religious faith, we were told, and if religion has weakened in comparison with pre-war Korea, this is due on the one hand to disillusionment with the USA, which had originally evangelized Korea, and on the other to the fact that young people find Juche sufficient for their spiritual needs.

A good deal of our discussions clarified the Northern position on peace and reunification. The North insists that they have repeatedly made reasonable proposals for unification, along the lines of the three principles agreed to in the 1972 North-South Joint Statement (i.e. that national reunification should be achieved independently without reliance on and interference of outside forces, peacefully without recourse to

armed force, and through a national unity which transcends differences of thought, ideology or social system). President KIM Il Sung, we were told, had proposed the quickest way to achieve these, namely the creation of the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo (the ancient name for Korea), which would maintain the two social systems as they presently exist, under a single, strictly neutral and peace-loving federation.

The North is convinced, we were told, that the main obstacle to reunification is the presence of the USA in South Korea, with 40,000 US troops and more than 1,000 nuclear weapons stationed permanently, and annual "Team Spirit" military exercises that employ more than 200,000 troops. The North had always insisted that the Armistice, which had been signed by the USA and the DPRK, must be turned into a peace agreement, and that a non-aggression treaty should be signed with the South, which would then serve to reduce tensions on the peninsula.

In response to a question about the role of the United Nations, we were told that the DPRK opposes membership of either side until there can be membership of one Korea, as otherwise a *de facto* division of Korea will be legalized. We were reminded of the ambiguous role played by the UN during the Korean war. The USA is still deploying its forces in South Korea under the United Nations flag.

#### **FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH NORTH KOREAN CHRISTIANS**

On Sunday morning we were taken to the headquarters of the Korean Christians Federation, housed in the same building as the Korean Social Democratic Party, where we met a number of KCF officials, including Pastor Ko Gi Jun, its General Secretary.

To underline the symbolic nature of our visit as envoys of the three WCC member churches in the South, we presented to Pastor Ko a gift of six hymnbooks from the National Council of Churches in Korea. In return, we were given copies of the Old and New Testaments. About 10,000 of these, together with a new hymnal, were published in 1983 and 1984. Before that, Bibles and hymnals printed in the 1930's had been in use. Everyone present was aware of the fact that this was the first exchange of gifts between Christian organizations in South and North since the division of the country.

Before the Korean war, we were told, there were some 120,000 Christians living in the North. There were 1,400 church buildings, as well as theological institutes and Bible schools. In Pyongyang alone, there were 20,000 Christians out of a population of 400,000 worshipping in 70 churches. The predominant denominations had been the Presbyterian and the Methodist, who were more firmly rooted in the North. The Roman Catholic Church had been stronger in the South, with only about 10,000 believers and 50 churches in the North.

But this was before the brutal and fratricidal war that left ten million family members divided, without the means even to know whether relatives on the other side are alive or dead.

It is difficult to estimate today's Christian population, but it could number as many as 10,000 though perhaps only half of them still practise their faith regularly. Neither churches nor denominations exist today in the North, we were told. The Korean Christians Federation was founded in November 1946, and includes Christians from all denominations.

Roman Catholics were estimated to have dwindled to a mere 800 adherents. There are no priests, and since the numbers are so small, Catholic believers worship primarily within their own families. Pastor Ko had heard that some small worship places do exist, but he had no knowledge where these might be. There was no separate Catholic organization, though some Catholic individuals had joined the KCF. There was no relationship with the Vatican.

Worshipping communities of plus or minus 10 believers gather in house churches every Sunday, we were told. In Pyongyang alone, there are 30 to 40 house churches. We worshipped in one of these on the Sunday. Since fully trained and ordained pastors are in short supply, some 200 evangelists, deacons and presbyters serve the roughly 500 fixed places of worship throughout the country. In response to our question regarding the number of pastors, we had been told that only some ten pastors ordained before the war are still alive. Since 1972 however, the KCF has trained some twenty new pastors in three-year theological courses.

Immediately following our visit to Pyongyang, I travelled to Seoul in order to report to South Korean church leaders the results of our visit. I was greeted with passionate enthusiasm which surfaced despite the considerable layer of skepticism and curiosity that is so evident in South Korea when one speaks of Christians in the North. There is no doubt that the spontaneous feeling of Koreans on both sides of the divide is for mending the rift. At the same time, the pain of division has left open wounds which will be extremely difficult to heal.

If Christians in Seoul showed genuine enthusiasm, hanging on every word of my report, the government appeared afraid even to listen. I was invited to meet South Korea's Vice-Minister of Culture and Information. Although I indicated every willingness to share my experience in North Korea, he seemed more interested in lecturing me about the inadvisability of churches to become involved in "political" questions such as unification. For the Vice-Minister, the problem of a divided Korea is a purely political one, to be solved by representatives of the government. Churches are not competent to deal with the complications involved. He seemed unimpressed by the argument that perhaps humanitarian issues such as the division of families, or ethical questions of peace and justice might be roles which are basic and essential to the Christian faith, and therefore involve activities that churches and Christians have every reason to be engaged in.

As we sought to evaluate this first direct encounter with North Korea, a number of questions seemed inescapable : Will our visit enable other similar experiences ? To what extent will it make possible further steps in the process of establishing contact from the outside world to a people who have lived under an almost total isolation for longer than the average age of its citizens ? To what extent will it enable bridges to be built between the two parts of a divided Korea, between people whose history has been a single one for millennia, but whose very identity has been bisected within a period of only one generation ?

In the last analysis, not what we learned or discovered in the North would be important, but the extent to which we had begun a dialogue which has some chance of being continued and expanded. A positive signal was that no attempt was made by the DPRK authorities to turn our visit into a propaganda advantage. Apart from a tiny notice in a column of the daily newspaper reserved for announcing foreign visitors, our

presence remained discreet. Nor was there any attempt to suggest to us the content of what we should report about our visit to the outside world. "Tell them everything that you have seen and heard", we were advised. If the WCC could do its share for the reduction of tensions, for peace and the ultimate unification of Korea, this would be enough to satisfy their expectations.

## **PRINCIPLES FOR ECUMENICAL CONTACT**

It was clear that although ours was the first official ecumenical visit to the DPRK, its very purpose was to make possible further visits of this nature. At the same time, there has always been the danger that opening the floodgates to ecumenical tourism or denominational adventurism could be harmful to the delicate process of reconciliation which lies at the heart of Korean hopes and dreams. On the basis of the Tozanso conclusions, which had been accepted in principle by North Korean Christians, a number of principles for ecumenical contacts with the North seemed inescapable :

1. To be consonant with the Tozanso Process, any ecumenical visit to the DPRK should have an open, clearly stated mandate from a church or ecumenical institution. The representativity of Christians travelling to North Korea will distinguish the visit from mere tourism, and will dispel fears on the part of Christians in the South that the visit is ideologically motivated or controlled.
2. Any visit to the DPRK should have as a basis an established relationship with the churches in the Republic of Korea. Contacts with the North should not be ends in themselves, but the initial stages of direct contact between Christians of North and South. Persons travelling to the North should know the South, should alert the churches in the South of their intended visit and should take care to report to them the results of their visits.
3. The content of any visit to the DPRK should take into account the interrelationship of peace and justice. In evaluating the result of encounters both in the North and in the South, the extent to which both peace and justice have been addressed should be a key criterion of the success of the visit.
4. Published reports of visits to the DPRK should take into account the effect of such publications, both with regard to the relationships which the visit helped to create with Christians in the North, and with regard to the credibility of such reports in the eyes of Christians in the South. The language used should be factual and tentative, intent on opening rather than closing doors, creating confidence between the people of North and South rather than aggravating misperceptions and animosities.

## **A MOMENTOUS ENCOUNTER**

The first WCC visit to North Korea has meanwhile become eclipsed by numerous historical "firsts". We had stressed during our visit that we were merely forerunners of what was hoped to be a direct encounter of Christians from North and South. Having received positive reactions from the North for a proposed meeting in a third country, we set about planning a seminar on the "biblical and theological foundations of Christian concern for peace".

All the 22 participants at the meeting in Glion, Switzerland in September 1986 were aware that they were witnessing a moment of great significance in Korean church history. In his welcoming address, Ninan Koshy described the meeting as the beginning

of a new chapter in the ecumenical movement. Building bridges and working for peace, he said, had always been major elements in the search for Christian unity.

Prior to the seminar, the five-person delegation representing the KCF from North Korea paid their first official visit to the WCC headquarters in Geneva. They attended an ecumenical worship and were greeted by WCC General Secretary Emilio Castro. They also met with leaders of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Lutheran World Federation.

This was merely the prelude, however, to a momentous encounter. In Glion they were introduced to a six-person delegation representing the WCC member churches and the National Council of Churches of (South) Korea. Those of us who harboured apprehensions as to how the two delegations would react were to be shamed by events as they unfolded. Though tensions surfaced again and again at the meeting, it became clear in informal discussions during meals and breaks that both sides were expending great effort to make this first encounter a success.

It was agreed that a joint communiqué on political positions would be impossible to arrive at and would unnecessarily complicate any follow-up. The two delegations reaffirmed the role Christians and churches in their two countries should play in breaking down barriers and creating a new, just and peaceful future for a unified Korea.

The seminar concluded with worship, using the liturgy celebrated at the WCC Sixth Assembly in Vancouver. In this way, the North Korean Christians could join with the entire ecumenical community in "The Feast of Life" eucharist. North and South Korean pastors shared responsibility for sermon, prayers, Scripture readings.

The most dramatic moment came when the celebrant invited the congregation to give one another a sign of reconciliation and peace. What began as timid handshakes soon broke out into warm embraces which left no heart untouched. More powerful than any paper that could have been written is the hope that is still alive in the hearts of a people divided now over 40 years. The fact that Christians from North and South could pray and worship together is testimony to the assurance that the reunification of Korea is possible.

Following this meeting, which has come to be known as "GLION ONE", the CCIA began earnest preparation for a major WCC policy statement on Korea. This included a second visit by an expanded CCIA delegation to North Korea in November 1987, in order to consult with both Christian and government officials regarding elements which might be included in such a statement. The intention was not to simply restate positions which have remained stagnant over the years, but to test the waters on the amount of flexibility available for launching new initiatives and breakthroughs.

The delegation encountered greater flexibility than it expected, although there were also a considerable number of sticking points, for example with regard to possible mechanisms for family contacts and reunification between the two sides. The delegation came away more convinced than ever that people-to-people contacts outside the context of government posturing and "face-saving" offer the most realistic opportunities for establishing the foundations of progress. It therefore encouraged renewed efforts to involve more of the ecumenical community in establishing such contacts.



## ECUMENICAL SOLIDARITY

International ecumenical sharing of responsibilities and division of labour have been fundamental principles in the ecumenical movement. Those whose churches or nations have been most immediately involved or affected have pledged the most urgent and concerted actions. This has been the case in particular with churches of the USA, Japan and Canada.

The USA has been most directly involved in the division of Korea, in the Korean war and in the maintenance of a military machinery including nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula. Japan's colonial heritage in Korea has been one of the chief reasons for Korea's pain over the past century. The disarming of Japanese troops was the reason cited by the USA and the USSR at the close of World War II for dividing the Korean peninsula. Canada was a combatant in the Korean war, but Canadian churches also feel a strong bond with Korea because of the fact that Canadian missions were a major component of the growth of Christianity in Korea over the past 100 years.

Soon after the WCC's first visit to North Korea, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) sponsored, together with Canadian church representatives, a *North American Ecumenical Conference on the Unification of Korea* in December 1985. It was at this conference that a new strategy, consonant with the Tozanso guidelines, was set into motion. The meeting was followed by intensive discussions between the NCCCUSA and representatives of both South and North Korea regarding possible visits to their countries. Both sides agreed to this, and dialogue and consultation with church and government leaders took place in North and South Korea in April and May 1986.

In November 1986 the NCCCUSA Governing Board issued a major *Policy Statement on Peace and the Reunification of Korea* which became the object of discussions and follow-up actions by the major churches in its constituency. The statement pledges the NCCCUSA among other things to "press for the negotiated withdrawal of all US nuclear weapons in and all US and USSR nuclear weapons targeted on Korea... call for the suspension or substantial reduction in scale of military exercises on both sides of Korea", and to urge "the United States Government to initiate negotiations to end the war and bring about a comprehensive peace settlement in Korea as a step toward the reunification of the peninsula."

In June-July 1987, a top-level NCCCUSA delegation again visited the two parts of Korea, this time led by its General Secretary Rev. Arie Brouwer. In its report after the visits, the delegation stated :

*"The engagement of the churches on issues related to peace and the reunification of Korea is a remarkable example of what can be accomplished if the churches around the world put their prayers, energies and resources together. The progress made in developing relationships with the churches and people of a nation about which most of us were almost completely ignorant is impressive and heartwarming. But like everything the churches do, it is patience and steadfastness that are required to achieve the goals we pursue. It is important to recall the ecumenical principle that the witness of national churches is most needed and most effective in their society. While we deeply desire to maintain and deepen our relationships with the churches, Christians and peoples of both parts*

*of Korea, it is imperative that we intensify our efforts to inform and mobilize public opinion in our own nation for change of US policy. Without this, the efforts of Koreans themselves will be much less likely to succeed.”*

Following this insight, the NCCCUSA launched a *National Campaign to Support Peace and the Reunification of Korea* at a national conference in Washington D.C. in April 1989. Delegations of the KCF and the NCCCK attended this conference as guests. It was the first time that a larger delegation of North Koreans received visas to enter the USA. It was also the first time that such a delegation was able to meet the broader constituency of Korean-Americans. Numerous encounters illustrated the intense desire for reunification among Koreans, yet also the deeply entrenched distrust and hostility which continues to divide Koreans.

In Canada, a parallel process was initiated by the Canada-Asia Working Group (CAWG), an inter-church coalition mandated under the Canadian Council of Churches. In December 1985, CAWG issued a *Statement on North Korea*, which stated :

*“We affirm the desirability of the Canadian church to know and understand better the situation of the people of North Korea... We believe it desirable to encourage groups of Canadian church members to make visits to North Korea where possible, to open up people-to-people contacts and to share their experiences on their return to Canada... Since to date Canadian diplomats and government officials have not encouraged contacts with North Korea, we see value in sharing with them such reliable information as we obtain and the results of our own contacts. We urge their cooperation in facilitating people-to-people exchanges both through visits to North Korea and academic and cultural exchanges that bring North Koreans to Canada.”*

In November 1988 a Canadian Council of Churches delegation visited North Korea and returned with recommendations to the Canadian government and Canadian member churches. An invitation has meanwhile been extended for the visit of a KCF delegation to Canada, which is expected to take place in May, 1990.

In May 1986 a delegation of the National Christian Council in Japan visited North Korea. Their report confesses that “our hearts have been filled with pain because we have not been able to maintain fellowship with Christians of North Korea.” This pain is due to a heavy burden of history :

*“While remembering the 36 years of Japan’s colonization of Korea starting from 1910, it was our great journey of Shalom to be able to confess our many many sins of omission and commission as the very same Japanese who visited such unendurable pain and oppression on the people of Korea. We feel a great sense of responsibility as Japanese for the present division of Korea, with North and South divided against each other and kept under such immense tension. Within this context, while relations with South Korea have deepened, there are still no diplomatic ties with North Korea, thereby making its land and people among the world’s most distant from Japan, even though we are geographically neighbours.”*

In the same year, 1987, an “European Ecumenical Network for Korea” was founded, including the churches in Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Great Britain. Among its activities have been intensive educational efforts,

including the provision of information to European journalists covering the Seoul Olympics in the Summer of 1986. In 1988, a delegation of the KCF for the first time attended the Evangelical Church of (West) Germany's mammoth "Kirchentag" in Berlin/West.

For a number of reasons (having to do largely with political constraints in working out of an Asian context) the Christian Conference of Asia has played more of a role behind the scenes than in the limelight. All the more important is it to acknowledge the important contributions made by the CCA with regard to the Korean issue and the Tozanso Process from the very beginning. The CCA's Ecumenical Peace Programme in Asia has undergirded efforts for peace with practical and theological contributions and educational materials intended to help Asian churches become informed of and involved in steps towards the reduction of tensions in North-East Asia, particularly Korea.

The first visit by a staff member of the CCA to North Korea took place in September 1989. It opened an avenue which the CCA is sure to pursue following its General Assembly in 1990.

The "ecumenical discipline" so emphasized by the Tozanso Process has remained largely intact. Churches and ecumenical agencies have remained closely in touch with each other's initiatives relating to Korean reunification and contacts with Christians on both sides of the Korean peninsula. Much progress has been achieved, and the global ecumenical community can take credit for its crucial role in this regard.

## **KOREAN CHRISTIANS IN THE VANGUARD**

As has been affirmed in Tozanso, the primary agents of Korean reunification are the Koreans themselves. The ecumenical community can merely assist in a process that must be led by Koreans. The tremendous advances experienced in the Tozanso Process are due first and foremost to the courageous and untiring efforts of the Korean people and their churches.

In spite of persistent government pressures opposing such activities, the NCCCK held its first conference on "Justice, Peace and the Church" in May 1985. This meeting served as the launching pad for institutionalizing work towards the reunification of Korea within the NCCCK and also within member denominations. Each year from 1985 to 1988, an NCCCK-sponsored conference on national reunification was held. The fourth such conference, in January 1988, concluded the drafting of a "*Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace*", which was officially issued one month later by the NCCCK General Assembly.

It should be remembered that these same churches have also fought and won an intense struggle for democratization in South Korea. They had lobbied with all political parties who entered the first democratic elections in two decades, asking them to make public their positions on national reunification.

The NCCCK Declaration is a document of theological, pastoral and political significance. It tries to exorcize the hostilities of a life-time of division with theological reference to confession, conversion, reconciliation and salvation. It asks ecumenical partners the world over to join in a yearly prayer for reunification of their country. It also launches a challenge to political authorities in and around Korea with a focus for

the hopes of Koreans everywhere by proclaiming 1995, the 50th year of Korean division, a *Jubilee Year for Peace and Reunification*.

Response from North Korea to this proposal was immediate. The KCF welcomed the Declaration, and this fact was broadcast by radio from Pyongyang, much to the embarrassment of the NCKK, which was immediately put under pressure by a government still resolutely opposed to having non-governmental agents "meddle" in what they consider to be the affairs of state.

Despite this opposition, the NCKK continued plans to hold an *International Christian Consultation on Justice and Peace in Korea*, which took place in Incheon, Korea, in April 1988. 320 participants from 17 countries around the world could share in the joy of being able to meet within Korea on a subject which had forced the WCC only four years earlier to seek a venue in Tozanso, Japan. One day before the consultation opened, the political party in power in South Korea suffered a resounding defeat in parliamentary elections. The joy of Koreans in being able to face the future with real hope for the first time in decades of suffering surfaced in the report of the consultation :

*"The period since Tozanso and these days during the Consultation have shown that God is still alive and working in the history of the Korean people. As we believe that the resurrection follows the pain of the cross, so we are reminded to trust that the long years of suffering will bring for the Korean people the dawning of a new era of shalom within a reunified nation."*

Important developments have occurred also in the Northern part of Korea for both Protestant and Roman Catholic believers. The Canadian delegation which visited the North in 1988 brought back photographs, videotapes and details of two new church buildings which have been constructed in Pyongyang, and the formation of a Korean Catholics Association (KCA). Excerpts of their report :

*"The Christian community has achieved a more distinct public presence during the past year with the construction of two churches, one Catholic and one Protestant. These are the first church buildings and, to our knowledge, the first public expressions of Christianity in the DPRK since the Korean war. Both buildings are located in Pyongyang because, according to officials, transportation is relatively easy within the city and there are sufficient numbers of Christians in the area. In both cases, however, the construction of the church buildings has been seen as projects undertaken by and on behalf of their respective communities throughout the country. The Protestant church, named for the Pongsoo section of Pyongyang in which it is located, has been built by the KCF. Adjacent to the church is a new, two-storey office building that will serve as the national headquarters and training center for the KCF. Our delegation was received in this building by the Central Committee of the KCF, and we attended the inaugural worship held in the church on 6 November 1986. We were told that Christians throughout the country had made special offerings to finance the construction of the buildings. The Pongsoo church contains a bright but simple sanctuary which can accommodate about 250 worshippers..."*

*"In June 1987, members of the Vatican delegation to a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Pyongyang also met with local Catholics. A preparatory committee was formed in October 1987 which began the tasks of identifying Catholics in various parts of the country and initiating the construction of a church building. In April 1988 a delegation of North Korean Catholics*

*was invited to the Vatican to pursue discussions on how to promote relationships among Catholics and on how Catholics, North and South, may contribute to the cause of reunification... The KCA was formally organized on 30 June 1988, and is in the initial stages of becoming a functioning body. The KCA claims a membership of about 300... The Catholic church is located in the Chang Chung section of Pyongyang. Adjacent to the church is a new two-storey office building that will serve as headquarters for the KCA... Construction was begun in March 1988, and an opening ceremony was held on 2 October 1988."*

A second Protestant church building has been erected in Pyongyang in 1989. Individuals close to North Korea have reported that the Tozanso Process has helped not only to free North Korean Christians from an international isolation, but have given them a new respectability and status within their country. For those who have criticized the ecumenical process of being more concerned with politics than Christian mission or religious liberty, these developments must surely vindicate an open, sensitive, caring approach to evangelism, the sharing of God's Good News.

## **BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER**

Glion was the site of the second direct encounter between North and South Korean Christians, this time enlarged also to include women delegates from both sides. Meeting in November 1988, in the wake of the remarkable changes outlined here, the group felt that the time was ripe to put on paper the hopes of Christians from both parts of Korea.

It was not easy to come to an agreement on the text which became the *Glion Declaration on Peace and the Reunification of Korea*. This I see as a sign of the maturity and responsibility of the participants. These were not individuals who were giving reign to their dreams, but members of two communities searching for realistic ways out of a tragic impasse.

The *Glion Declaration* contains common perceptions and recommendations for their societies to move towards reunification. It also contains an important theological affirmation that gives reason to a common hope :

*"We believe that God is the Lord of History, creating history anew in every situation, and the judge of all human history. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, rejected the deceptive peace built on power, and condemned human greed and arrogance. We believe that the Holy Spirit, working against the human divisions of hostility and hatred, is calling us into a holy community founded on the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

"GLION TWO", as the meeting came to be called, declared the observance of 1985 as the Jubilee Year for Unification to be a "decision of churches in both North and South". This is the first time since division that Korean Christians have adopted a common programme of action. Also agreed was the designation of the Sunday before 15 August each year as a *Common Day of Prayer for Peace*, in which Koreans ask the ecumenical community worldwide to join in prayer with their Korean counterparts on both sides. Glion two also adopted a common prayer text, the first such liturgical element to be used by Christians in both North and South Korea on the same Sunday in August 1989.

In July 1989, the WCC Central Committee, meeting in Moscow with both North and South Koreans in attendance for the first time in the WCC's history, issued an extensive and detailed *Policy Statement on Peace and the Reunification of Korea*.

The statement illustrates how the Tozanso Process has brought all the elements of ecumenical peace-making together in a remarkably practical way. It shows how ecumenical solidarity can function as a powerful tool of Christian mission. Though denominational chauvinism time and again reared its ugly head, threatening the process and its fruits, ecumenical reason has so far prevailed.

Still, the ultimate task set by Tozanso has yet to be accomplished. There are numerous further steps — more dramatic and more precarious — to be taken. One of these is a plan for a first North-South meeting of Korean Christians to be held on Korean soil.

## CONCLUSION

As the Berlin wall began to crumble on 9 November 1989, most Koreans were pre-occupied by one thought : how long before the wall separating the Korean people will be dismantled ?

Politics is the art of the possible, we are told. But what is possible so often depends on the spirit of a people, on what the people decide is possible, on the realistic assessment of aroused hopes. Glasnost, Perestroika and “New Political Thinking” have made the Cold War obsolete and turned the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe into a region of hope and expectation, into a celebration of the possible. When will Koreans be able to join in this celebration ?

When I stood for the first time on the northern side of the Military Demarcation Line in Panmunjon in November 1985, a tourist bus discharged its passengers on the other side of the impenetrable border. For some time we took pictures from either side. We could have shouted to each other, but we could not go to shake hands. American and North Korean soldiers have kept vigil against such display of humanity for 37 years at this juncture.

Where we stood, we were 70 kilometres from the city of Seoul. Had we taken the Mercedes Benz in which we had come from Pyongyang, we could have reached our friends in Seoul in less than an hour, along the smooth, wide highway to the south.

Yet it took me two days and over 8 hours of flying time via Beijing and Tokyo to reach that same destination. This is the most blatant example known to me of the madness of our modern age. It is also the most agonizing example of a tragedy that has lasted all too long.

It is because the world is divided that Korea is divided. In our euphoria over the conclusion of the Cold War, we must not forget that the effects of that war claim victims even today. The suffering of the Korean people concerns us all.

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# **GEO-POLITICAL CHANGES AFFECTING THE EFFORT TO REUNIFY KOREA\***

*Pharis J. Harvey*

## **INTRODUCTION**

It is a special privilege for me to be with you in this historic meeting. As a citizen of the United States, whose actions divided your land, as well as a missionary of the United Methodist Church, which has been in Korea for over a century, I have inherited an intense but not necessarily consistent heritage regarding Korea. With that background I join you in fervent prayer that the faith we all confess may be an instrument for unity and peace for Korea and the world.

I am also struck by the swift pace of history. It was only four years ago that some of us gathered at Tozanso, Japan to initiate a process that few believed would yield fruit so rapidly. Four years later, a number of national and international church delegations have visited the DPRK and the ROK, an international Christian conference on peace and unification has been held on Korean soil, two meetings with Christian representatives from both parts of Korea have now taken place, Catholic as well as Protestant churches have been built in Pyongyang, and dialogue has also begun between the Vatican and authorities of the DPRK. The movement of the Holy Spirit continues to sweep through our time in quite surprising ways.

While we are all aware of the limitations and obstacles with which this process has had to cope, nevertheless, I join you all in thanking God that we have come to this place. We are still in the wilderness, but the landscape is growing less desolate as we begin to glimpse the promised land on the horizon, and we have been given the manna we need for our journey.

I have been asked to speak about the changing geo-political context for reunification in Korea. That is a dauntingly complex and fast-changing topic, about which I make no pretence of comprehensive understanding.

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\* Text of presentation at the Glion Two meeting in November 1988 — updated and revised.

I notice that the programme has listed this session's topic as "Some Perspectives on New Developments in the Korean Peninsula". With your permission I will not try to analyse developments in the peninsula, but rather limit myself to some changes in the surrounding nations that affect the Korean peninsula. What is happening in Korea itself is a matter about which all of you here have a far better sense than I, although obviously there is much overlap between external and internal events, particularly these days.

At the outset, given the history of intervention which my own country and other regional powers have long exercised vis-a-vis Korea, it is probably necessary to re-affirm my conviction that only the people of Korea can bring about national reunification. All efforts of others can only contribute to or detract from this central effort. However, precisely for that reason it is important to understand clearly what may be changing in the international environment and how it may affect efforts for peace and unity in Korea.

## **A BIBLICAL DETOUR**

As people of faith, we turn to the Scriptures for guidance, not about the details of our time, but for an understanding of the deeper currents of history that serve as clues to the activity and purpose of God. It was with this in mind as I began to prepare that I looked at the Old Testament, to the period of the divided kingdom, when Israel and Judah were separated, both caught up in the competing claims of larger, more powerful neighbors, Assyria — Babylon, Egypt. What I found surprised me.

Jeremiah, the fierce prophet of doom was a man acutely tuned both to the voice of Yahweh and to the geo-political context of Israel's life. At a time of great confusion and peril, when the armies of Babylon were threatening to destroy the city of Jerusalem, most of the prophets and wise men were shouting for resistance to the last man, or until the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. But Jeremiah urged surrender and exile in Babylon, in order to preserve the people and the city for the future. He told King Zedekiah, "These are the words of the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel... I now give all these lands to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon." (Jer. 27:6) It was a strange wisdom of accommodation and survival, for which he was nearly stoned to death.

However, some years later, when the time was ripe, when Babylon's power to destroy Jerusalem had waned, but also at a time when the people of Israel had grown comfortable in exile, Jeremiah, who had remained in the deserted city, called for his people to return, "The Lord has saved his people, and preserved a remnant of Israel. See how I bring them from the land of the north; I will gather them from the ends of the earth, their blind and lame among them, women with child and women in labour, a great company. They come home, weeping as they come, but I will comfort them and be their escort." (Jer. 31:7-9)

Without attempting to draw more lessons from this than are warranted, this passage said to me to keep open to the unexpected, that faithfulness depends upon a careful understanding of principalities and powers, that Nebuchadnezzar might in fact be an instrument for the salvation of God's people, and that those who wish to attune themselves to the will of God would do well to understand the empires around them but also to know when those empires have run their course or ended their usefulness to the God of history and freedom.



With that brief biblical excursion as prologue, let me begin to describe what appear to me as the most significant developments among the powers surrounding Korea that affect its hope for reunification (without, I might add, attempting to identify any of them as necessarily being the servants of God).

## **A PATH THROUGH THE SEA**

In these past few weeks, much of the world, at least that part of it linked by common television service, has been caught up in the saga of two California whales trapped in the ice of the Arctic Ocean, who were finally freed by an international effort involving native Inuit people from the area, a Soviet icebreaker, and U.S. oil companies.

What seems to be happening nowadays is that the ice of the Cold War has finally begun to break up after forty three years and while there are still huge and dangerous ice floes, icebergs and many storms on the sea, paths for survival of the whales are beginning to open up. What also seems to be the case is that the break up in Asia is being generated primarily by initiatives of the Soviet Union and China, to which the U.S. and its allies are making very tentative, uncertain responses still mostly conditioned by Cold War expectations. How to assess the responses being made by DPRK and ROK leaders is something I hope to learn from all of you.

## **GLASNOST IN ASIA**

There will be little doubt now that the reforms being carried out in the Soviet Union today under the leadership of Secretary General and President Mikhail Gorbachev are among the most important historical developments of our time, regardless whether we view them positively or negatively. Not only the people of the Soviet Union, but virtually all nations of the world are adjusting to the changes underway there in the name of glasnost and perestroika. While this is dramatically the case in Europe, it is also true in Asia.

The most powerful engine for Soviet change in Asia policy is the drive to overcome the economic malaise that afflicts the country in general, but the Far East and Pacific region in particular. As Prof. Roy Kim has pointed out, Gorbachev faced four economic challenges in his July 1986 speech in Vladivostok :

- a) the Siberian economy was in a pre-crisis stage of stagnancy;
- b) the Soviet Union was isolated from the economic dynamism of the Asian region;
- c) China's economic reforms and new dynamism has challenged Soviet planners to new kinds of innovation; and
- d) the cost of military competition with the U.S. had become unmanageable and was preventing the use of resources for economic growth. <sup>1</sup>

The central importance for Asia of Gorbachev's initiative lies in the fact that it is bringing into action a new definition of "national interest" by the Soviet Union, which means a modification of the "bloc" politics which has characterized the USSR's rela-

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1 Kim, Roy. "Gorbachev and the Korean Peninsula", Third World Quarterly, Summer, 1988, pp. 1268-1271.

tions to the area since the 1940s, and a return to a traditional “buffer” politics which I believe holds great potential for the evolution of a neutral, unified Korea, even if that may not be a part of the Soviet design at the present moment, as it appears not to be. To put it differently, Soviet (and Chinese) policy in Asia is attempting to separate economics from politics.

In Asia, a “Soviet bloc” along the lines of Eastern Europe, has never existed, and the attempt to create one has long been a rather vain hope as a basis for the extension of Soviet power, since what might pass for a Soviet bloc consists of only a few nations scattered across a huge continent. Except in Indochina, these states are bound together neither by proximity (which might lead to economic or defense pacts) nor common interests vis-à-vis their neighbor, beyond an allegiance to various forms of Marxist political ideology, aid and poorly developed trade relations with Warsaw pact nations, and a common sense of threat from powerful capitalist neighbors. China, which was for a long time the centrepiece of a Soviet internationalist vision, has gone its own way for decades. Little by little, the revolutionary Communist movements in much of the rest of Asia have lost importance as the central agents of Soviet influence.

Outside the circle of Asian socialist states, the Soviet Union has been hampered by its antagonistic relations with Japan caused by the territorial disputes remaining from World War II, and by, of course, the dominating presence in the region of U.S. economic and military power.

Thus, it was not surprising that, in his famous Vladivostok speech of July 28, 1986, Secretary Gorbachev, who has overturned so many other stock ideas of the past several decades, also began to question implicitly the wisdom of a narrow “bloc” approach to Asia and to return, it appears, to a more traditional Russian — pre-Soviet — attitude of “buffer” politics based on more clearly defined “national interests”, that is, seeking a zone of states on its borders that, while not necessarily under Soviet control, can be counted on not to betray its essential interests, and development of less ideological relationships with other states in the region, characterized more by mutual economic interests than by political loyalties. The difficult corollary for this is that the Soviet are being pressured to respect the same level of “national interest” from the various nations within USSR borders as well as on its periphery.

To achieve such a new stance, the Soviet Union is trying to lessen the hostility of a number of these Asian states, from Japan to the Philippines, the other ASEAN countries, to New Zealand and Australia, and into the Indian Ocean area, endorsing non-nuclear zones throughout the region, and expressing its willingness to lower its own military presence, particularly in Vietnam and Cambodia, in return for American withdrawals from the Philippines and inviting important new levels of economic interaction, investment and trade as part of the Soviet drive to revitalize the Siberian economy.

At the same time, it is undertaking a major overhaul of its relationship with China, rapidly moving to resolve the three outstanding items of the Chinese complaint against it — the Sino-Soviet border disputes; Soviet support for Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia; and the Afghanistan conflict. The Afghanistan problem may be close to a solution, if the Afghan government can reach out broadly enough to form a coalition government that can check the guerilla resistance movement’s base of popular support, and if the United States does not supply such an amount of “covert” aid to the

Mujahedin as to undermine the withdrawal itself. Gorbachev's call for UN assistance in forming an acceptable Afghan coalition government, is one of the clearest indications of the new direction of this policy.

The Sino-Soviet border issue is being eased by the withdrawal last year of about 10,000 Soviet troops from Mongolia, according to some estimates, and a stated willingness to consider further withdrawals. The Cambodian issue is the most sticky one, but recent negotiations in Paris seem to be making progress on this as well, leading to a strong possibility that by next spring, the Soviet Union and China will hold their first summit in thirty years. <sup>2</sup>

In relations with Japan, there appear to have been few Soviet break-throughs, partly as a result of a longstanding diplomatic passivity in the Japanese government toward the United States, partly due to preoccupation in Tokyo with the imperial succession and questions about the future role of the emperor, and partly resulting from the fact that the Soviets have offered very little to Japan on the most basic issue dividing them, the fate of the northern islands. But on questions of trade, investment and industrial technology transfers, Japanese interest is growing.

It is on the Korea question that Mr. Gorbachev has been most cautious, which reflects, I believe, awareness of how sensitive this area is. His July 1986 speech touched on the Korean issue gingerly, and very briefly. Having proposed a Pacific Conference along the lines of the Helsinki Conference to develop what he called an "international security system" of balanced force reductions and confidence building measures, he went on to say :

"There is the possibility of not only getting rid of the dangerous tension on the Korean peninsula, but of beginning a movement along the path of solving the national problem of the entire Korean people. If one starts from truly Korean interests, there are no rational grounds for rejecting the serious dialogue being proposed by the DPRK.

... We are in favour of putting a barrier on the path of the proliferation and build-up of nuclear arms in Asia and in the Pacific. It is well known that the Soviet Union has bound itself not to increase its medium-range nuclear missiles in the Asian part of the country. ... The implementation of the DPRK proposal on the creation of a nuclear-free zone on the Korean peninsula would be a serious contribution." <sup>3</sup>

On September 16, 1988, in another major address at Krasnoyarsk just on the eve of the Seoul Olympics, Gorbachev returned to his proposal for "a multilaterally based discussion on the question of reducing military confrontation in the regions where the

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2 Daniel Southerland, "Moscow's Envoy to Beijing Cites Improved Relations", Washington Post, November 11, 1988.  
The meeting took place in May 1989.

3 From Moscow Television Service, translated by U.S.-Foreign Broadcast Information Service, July 29, 1986, p. R17.

shores of the USSR, China, Japan, the DPRK, and South Korea converge.’’<sup>4</sup> The essence of his proposal was echoed a few weeks later by South Korean President Roh Tae Woo, who called for a six-party international conference on reducing hostilities in the Korean peninsula when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly on October 18.

Gorbachev also noted that “‘based on an overall improvement of the situation on the Korean peninsula, I believe the possibility has emerged to set economic relations with South Korea in the right direction.’’ Actions taken before then and since make it clear that “‘the right direction’’ is to distinguish even more clearly between economic and political relations, and to enhance the economic ties while withholding the political.

In the interim between these two Gorbachev speeches, the Soviet Union took several steps to reaffirm its political ties to the DPRK at the same time it began to explore economic relations with the ROK. These measures included the provision of some advanced military assistance to the North and the announcement of a decision for the Soviet President to visit Pyongyang (which was subsequently re-scheduled for next spring after Soviet President Andrei Gromyko retired to make room for Gorbachev to assume the presidency). On the other side, the USSR participated fully in the Olympic Games in Seoul, and while it supported the DPRK’s position on co-hosting it did not make that a condition of its participation. In the context of the games, the USSR has also negotiated the opening of a trade office in Seoul, and an invitation to South Korean business to invest in the development of Siberia, and extended an invitation to South Korean opposition leader Kim Dae Jung to visit the Soviet Union. It is said that the South Korean government has offered investment capital amounting to several billion dollars and technology to the Soviet Union as part of an effort to develop stronger South Korean-Soviet relations.<sup>5</sup>

Economic relations between South Korea and China have been evolving along and even faster track, and it is estimated that South Korea-China trade will exceed 3 billion dollars this year. During 1988, a number of steps were taken by both governments to increase the ease of that trade, by opening up several regions of China for South Korean investment, tourism and allowing South Korean shipping companies direct access to several Chinese ports.

The major questions all these changes force us to ask are threefold : First, can economics and politics be really separated, and can policies that seek to separate politics from economics succeed in improving the overall political climate ?

Second, will the Soviet and Chinese trade arrangements with South Korea lead to a climate in which the reunification of Korea is easier or more difficult ?

Third, are there aspects of the Gorbachev proposals on regional defense and security that can bridge the gap between North and South Korean perceptions (or US views) to lead to some progress ?

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4 Foreign Broadcast Information Service, September 19, 1988, p. 58.

5 Kyodo News Agency Broadcast from Tokyo, July 23, 1988; translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, July 25, 1988, p. 28.

I imagine there is quite a variety of opinion in this conference on these questions. Let me venture my own preliminary assessment.

On the first question, while the divorce of economic and political relations is difficult to support from a theoretical perspective, in its practical application, it is very similar to the Koryo Confederal system proposed by the DPRK for bringing about a unified Korea under two independent economic systems. It is also close to the concept that is being developed in China to incorporate Hong Kong, with its economic structure basically intact, into the People's Republic.

The Soviets also have already experienced this distinction in their relations with Europe, and it is probable that the East-West German experience is uppermost in Gorbachev's mind as he proposes these changes in relations with South and North Korean.

It is clear, however, from both Chinese and Soviet experience, that the separation of politics and economics is at best temporary, that inevitably economic policy changes bring in their wake strong political pressures, and that the result may not be supportive of a strong central government initiative, which is necessary for the economic changes in the first place. Thus a paradox results, bringing some of the turmoil we can see happening in many regions of the Soviet Union and among its various allies in Europe.

This highlights the problem as well as the potential involved in the second question : will such a division of economic and political policies strengthen unification efforts or solidify division in Korea ? It would appear to me that the answer is genuinely up to the people of Korea. Broad involvement in the international trading system by North and South Korea could lessen international interest in supporting unification, but only if that interest wanes in Korea, making unification an unacceptable burden for one side. Economic interaction by itself is neutral. So, if the Korean people grow comfortable in their divided state because of eased economic relations, it will work against the pressure for unity. But if pressure continues to build within the country, having established eased economic relations across the ideological divide will help.

On the third question, many European, American and Australian experts have reacted to Gorbachev's proposal for an Asian Helsinki-like process by pointing to the dissimilarities between the European and Asian military situations. In Asia, U.S. and Soviet military forces are arrayed in asymmetrical forms. U.S. strength is primarily naval; Soviet strength is predominantly land-based. How can disarmament proposals compare the two ? How many divisions, or battalions, equal one aircraft carrier, etc. ?

It may be that they are right, that the dissimilarities are too great for the kind of quid-pro-quo agreements of the Helsinki process. However there is a further reason why a broad conference may not be the best context for military problems. Most of the conflicts in East Asia are bilateral — between the USSR and China, between North and South Korea, between the USSR and Japan. In most of these cases, even though the conflicts arose in a Cold War setting, their solutions depend on bringing them out of that into a less intense framework of a bilateral problem. If an ongoing conference of all the countries of the region is helpful in lowering the level of blockage by bloc politics, it is useful; but what might be more useful is a series of bilateral meetings between conflicting states, with the surrounding powers agreeing to support that process and abide by its results. After all, China and the USSR do not want the U.S. and Japan to get involved in

settling their border problem. The DPRK and ROK also do not need to involve the USSR, China, Japan and the U.S. in their conflict, except to the extent they are currently engaged in one side of it or another, and a regional conference or agreement probably can serve the two Korean partners best if its agenda is limited to establishing a context of non-intervention and mutual support.

Apart from the immediate effect of the Soviet proposals, it appears that the long-range impact of the new Gorbachev proposals in Asia will make Korean unification easier. From a military perspective, a unified Korean peninsula as a "buffer" zone — neutral, non-nuclear-armed, and unoccupied by foreign forces — could serve Soviet security needs vis-à-vis the United States more effectively than the present division, if, that is, the move away from rigid Soviet bloc politics were reciprocated by a similar pulling back by the United States, because it would mean there was one less area where local or regional antagonism could lead to unintended war that involved the Soviet Union in an area of comparative logistical disadvantage, and, therefore, for which the Soviet Union has to lay out considerable military contingency budgets.

Politically, a unified, neutral Korea would also be an important element in maintaining balance in the region vis-à-vis China, which could otherwise dominate easily by its size, proximity, and cultural ties. The historic closeness between Korea and China could be prevented from becoming anti-Soviet in character by careful support on the Soviet's part for Korean unification and neutrality. Japan's dominating tendencies could also be checked more effectively by a strong, neutral Korea than by the present situation of a dependent, economically integrated South and a peripherally interacting North.

Thus, for reasons quite apart from altruism or support of the dream of the Korean people, there seems to be emerging in the Soviet Union a policy that in fact can find a rationale for supporting a reunified Korea.

## **EVOLUTION OF U.S. POLICY**

These Soviet moves could be interpreted as just a cynical Soviet attempt to lower America's guard by trying to entice "its" bloc members into straying from the fold just as the U.S. is beginning to pressure them with its concept of "burden-sharing" on military matters and to apply various trade pressures to cope with the huge American trade deficit. There are interpreters in the U.S. who make such an argument. However, the fact remains that, whatever the Soviet moves mean, they have shifted the political context for super-power rivalry in Asia, and it will be necessary for the United States, however reluctantly, to respond.

In general, U.S. policy towards Korea under the Reagan Administration, whether in what I would consider its positive or its negative aspects, has been characterized primarily by reactions rather than innovations, and, I would have to add, by a lingering didactic style that tends to convey arrogance in a period of growing nationalistic sentiment in Korea. That may be an inevitable by-product of dominance in the region, but whatever the cause, the U.S. has taken few steps on its own in the past few years to advance either democratization or the lessening of hostilities. Even the few steps it has taken in recent months in support of increased dialogue and tension-reduction in Korea have been couched in terms that partially undermine that purpose.

However, there have been a few, halting steps, which while not as dramatic as the Soviet changes, do move U.S. policy in a more positive direction and are worth noting.

On February 6, 1987, Assistant Secretary of State of East Asia Gaston Sigur spoke to the U.S.-Korean government of Chun Doo Hwan and at the same time to the U.S. military. Sigur made an open commitment of the U.S. to civilianization of South Korean politics and directly challenged the ROK military to remain aloof from politics. While there is sufficient cause to question the extent of the U.S.'s commitment to a genuinely open political process in South Korea, this direct statement had the effect of undermining whatever support various ROK military commanders sought to gain from their colleagues in the U.S. 8th Army and may have been influential in preventing military intervention during the tense days of June last year and later.

Again, in what may have been solely a stratagem to ease the way for a successful Olympics, Assistant Secretary Sigur took several steps in the summer of 1987 to re-open dialogue with the DPRK, including, for the first time insofar as I am aware, the use of the formal term DPRK. That tender effort was cut off again after the disappearance of KAL flight 858 in November 1987, and until the past few weeks, has been replaced by a considerably hardened line toward North Korea, which has only been formally relaxed for the past three weeks.

Since Sigur is likely to remain influential on a new Bush Administration for some time, it is worthwhile to note some of the themes he articulated — and those he did not.

What was missing was any serious attention to the issues about the Korean peninsula to which Mikhail Gorbachev gave most attention in July 1986 : 1) the establishment of confidence-building procedures between hostile forces along the lines of the Helsinki process in Europe, 2) the negotiation of a non-nuclear zone in North-East Asia, and 3) most important if most vaguely expressed, “beginning a movement along the path of solving the national problem of the entire Korean people.” How Sigur related to these issues suggests something of the limits of U.S. policy. It is essentially trapped in a “security” mode of preserving a status quo from a perceived danger. It is also trapped in support of the ROK, with only the barest of openings to the DPRK, and these only to be extent of working for a lessening of areas for accidental conflict. <sup>6</sup>

Another important move was made by President Reagan in signing the INF Treaty with the Soviet Union, which agreed to the demobilization of all intermediate nuclear missiles in the Asian region, including those targeted at South Korea. While the agreement has not affected naval missiles on either American or Soviet submarines, it has left the U.S. nuclear missiles in Korea exposed as lacking any mission except local warfare on the Korean peninsula against a non-nuclear armed adversary, which is increasingly untenable from either a political or moral perspective. This, in turn, has led several U.S.

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6 The U.S. has proposed confidence-building measures directly to the representatives of the DPRK at the Military Armistice Commission on a number of occasions, but these have been limited primarily to calls for mutual observation of military exercises and have not been focused on any changes in the order of battle or mutual changes in aggressively deployed forces. The DPRK has refused these offers, apparently on the ground that to accept would be a tacit recognition of the legitimacy of U.S. forces remaining in South Korea.

generals and Pentagon officials to state publicly that nuclear weapons have no useful function in Korea. While the ongoing policy of “neither confirming nor denying” the presence of nuclear weapons overseas, which is important to the U.S. primarily because it avoids a conflict with the Japanese public over U.S. weapons based or ported there, in fact, the U.S. is moving gingerly toward accepting the idea of a non-nuclear Korea.

In the recent period, the U.S. has gone to great lengths to support the so-called North-Politics of South Korean President Roh, by advocating for Roh’s appearance at the UN, welcoming him in Washington and issuing new guidelines for a few elements of more relaxed relations with North Korea. However, in doing this, the U.S. has gone out of its way to indicate that its interest in relaxing with the DPRK was completely guided by its desire to support President Roh. Nothing has been said yet in response to the various proposals circulating between North and South Korea regarding military measures. It is true that the United States put the Korea question on the agenda in Paris when Secretary of State Shultz met Soviet Foreign Minister Edvard Shevardnaze, but the nature of any agreement between them is not yet publicly known.

One more or less non-official agreement between the International Strategic Institute at Stanford University (ISIS) and the Soviet Union’s Institute of Far Eastern Studies announced in October 1988 is, however, suggestive. A brief document, “On Strengthening Security and Developing Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula”, proposes a number of steps, some to be taken by the two governments in Korea, some by their respective supporters. Noteworthy aspects include the following items :

The establishment of a permanent cabinet level committee between the DPRK and ROK to begin negotiations on confidence-building measures.

“A first item on the agenda... should deal with the question of what can be done to make the DMZ and its environs less prone to tension and conflict”;

“the level of forces of the North and the South throughout the Korean peninsula should be a subject of negotiation, as should the overall level of foreign armed forces in Korea”;

“nuclear weapons also should be addressed. If an agreement to withdraw nuclear weapons, were achieved, such an agreement would provide that nuclear weapons, in the future, would not be stationed in either North or South Korea.”

In addition, “it would be necessary to limit the transfers of armaments into Korea and the type of weapons that could be indigenously produced.”

If these items have even latent support within the U.S. government, as I suspect they do, then there is room for progress in negotiating on the most difficult questions of all, the military confrontation in Korea and the U.S. role in sustaining it.

The growing expression of anti-American sentiment and the rapidly mushrooming demand in South Korea, as in North Korea, for the U.S. to withdraw its military forces, have shocked the American political establishment. Distracted from most serious issues by the seemingly permanent presidential campaign, serious discussion of this has been postponed in Washington. But with the new administration of George Bush desiring to establish itself on foreign policy matters, there is at least a possibility that the U.S. might begin to re-examine seriously its Korea policy.

In the short term, we can expect continuity with the Reagan policies on Korea, particularly until Bush has established some peace with the right wing of his party — until after major appointments have been made.



However, once the right wing is pacified — probably with tough rhetoric — Bush will be somewhat freed to look anew at the Korea question. The pressure of cutting the Federal budget will contribute to be a strong imperative for some imaginative breakthrough in Korea, one hopes. A clear signal from the people of Korea will help tremendously in making this possible, and it is for this reason among others, that this conference and other efforts at breaking new ground for peace in Korea are so very important.

## **A BRIEF UPDATE — ONE YEAR LATER**

During the period since this paper was written, the changes in world politics have been so breathtaking that no update could possibly remain current from the time it is written until the WCC printers finish their typesetting. Recognizing this, however, let me offer just a few comments on how these changes may impact the Korea question.

1. Eastern Europe's dramatic revolution has excited feelings in both parts of Korea that are a complex mixture of hope, fear, and envy. It is yet one more decisive act to transform the context of the Korean states' interaction. North Korea must face the prospect of even fewer states prepared to support it ideologically or to trade within the constraints of the COMECON system of barter among closed currency systems. This will undoubtedly add to its foreign exchange dilemmas, and consequently, to the pressures to develop a more open trading system. But the political upheaval in Eastern Europe has also made apparent the cost of such changes to parties and governments that have yielded to popular demands for pluralism inside as well as openness to the market economies.
2. In some very important ways, the students of China who died in Tienanmen Square in June 1989 were the martyrs for political change in Europe. Their deaths made apparent to the leadership of other embattled socialist states that the cost of resisting the pro-democracy movements was extremely high. In China itself, it is not certain, however, that the present leadership is prepared to reverse the economic directions of the past decade for the sake of tightened political control. Therefore, one must conclude that the turmoil in China is likely to continue for some time. Also, for this reason, it is unlikely that China will play an important regional role, either in advancing or resisting efforts at detente or peace, for some time.
3. North Korea, in the short run, appears to be reacting by trying to strengthen an alliance of socialist nations that have remained somewhat aloof from the Soviet sphere, and that therefore are at the moment somewhat buffered against internal changes. These include Romania, China and Albania. While this alliance may provide some ideological comfort, it is unlikely to provide much assistance in coping with the structural problems that each of these nations faces.
4. The opening of the Berlin Wall and discussion across Europe of a reunified Germany have awakened in both parts of Korea a strong desire not to remain a divided country. Koreans have long been aware that the issue of German reunification is different from that of Korea, and loaded with problems for the whole of Europe, while there is no equivalent historical threat to peace in Asia from a reunified Korea. This has the effect of strengthening the desire not to remain divided when even Germany is discussing or questioning new links.

5. South Korea, taking advantage of the changes in East Europe, has moved aggressively to open trade and diplomatic relations with Poland and Hungary, and increased its trade with the USSR, Czechoslovakia and other Warsaw Pact countries. An initial effort to step into the opening provided when most Western nations cut off access to China, to finance capital and trade advantages in the summer of 1989 was short-lived, however, and at the end of the year, ROK-China economic ties seemed to be almost as rocky as those of other Western powers trying to sort out how to relate to post-Tienanmen Square China.
6. In the United States, budgetary problems coupled with the apparent serious questioning of the U.S. Forces' presence in Korea for the first time since the mid-1970s. Few lawmakers have reached for a broader vision of peace in the Korean peninsula, but the potential for responding to initiatives from the other side has increased significantly.

U.S.-Soviet relations have in recent months concentrated on the European question, which will undoubtedly occupy their primary attention for the next several years. Yet, both the U.S. and the USSR aspire to being Pacific powers and the cost of military competition in this area is likely to continue to push both to an accommodation that will be supportive of efforts by the Korean people and governments to negotiate reconciliation and reunification.

U.S.-Korean relations have undergone no dramatic changes, but a cautious probing is underway between the United States and the DPRK. Six meetings have been held in Beijing between diplomats of the two governments, and several not quite official visits have been made. Gaston Sigur, now returned to his post as professor of Soviet Studies, George Washington University, in Washington, DC, visited Pyongyang in October 1989, for high-level conversations, about which he later expressed optimism. Ho Dam, Chair of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly Committee on Foreign Affairs, member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the Korean Workers Party, has been invited to visit the United States in April 1990. Arthur Hammel, former U.S. ambassador to China, has also recently visited the DPRK on a private visit. Mutual probing continues.

# PEACE, JUSTICE AND REUNIFICATION :

## CRIES OF THE KOREAN *MINJUNG*

*David Kwang-Sun Suh*

### I

The National Council of Churches of Korea adopted a historic statement on the issue of peace and life on the Korean peninsula on February 29, 1988, at its General Assembly. The statement, titled "The Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace", proclaims the year 1995 to be the Jubilee Year for Peace and Reunification.

The theological motive for proclaiming 1995 as the Jubilee Year for peace and reunification of Korea lies precisely in the spirit of Jubilee proclaimed by Jesus and in the Old Testament (Leviticus 25:8-12; Isaiah 61:1-4; Luke 4:16-19). The proclamation of the Jubilee Year for peace and reunification is our commitment to an effort for true liberation, *shalom* and the favorable year of the Lord in our historical situation. The year 1988, when the Korean Christians proclaimed that 1995 be the Jubilee Year for peace and the reunification of Korea, was the last sabbath year for us before the Jubilee Year.

The year 1995 is a jubilee year for Koreans, because that will be the year marking the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the Korean people from Japanese colonial rule. It will also mark the fiftieth year of the division of the Korean people and their land. Thus, the proclamation is a desperate expression of the hope and the aspiration of the Korean people to be liberated again by overcoming the division and by achieving peace in the peninsula. The Korean Christian Declaration of February 1988 "proclaims our firm resolution to bring about the restoration of the covenanted community of peace in the history of the Korean peninsula today." This is to let the homeless return to their land, and to let the broken and separated families be reunited again. And all of this is to restore the divided Korean peninsula to enable it to become one and whole again.

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*Minjung* is a Korean word which signifies the suffering people.

## II

The reunification issue is inevitably connected with the issue of peace. The cause of division itself was war (World War II), the result of division was war again (the Korean War), and the maintenance of division today is a continuous threat to peace on the peninsula. The maintenance of division cannot serve the maintenance of peace. The tense 250 kilometre DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) that divides North and South Korea is heavily militarized. Nearly 1 million North Korean soldiers and 700 thousand South Korean soldiers face each other armed to the teeth.

Moreover, in order to keep the division intact, 43,000 US soldiers, roughly 2/3 army and 1/3 air force, are stationed in Korea with 155 medium tanks, Vulcan air defense systems, I-Hawk and Redeye surface-to-air missiles, TOW and Dragon anti-tank weapons, nuclear capable F-16 fighter-bombers and so on, and about 130 nuclear weapons including 60 aircraft bombs and 70 artillery shells. It is the military analysts' conclusion that Korea may be the most likely place in the world for a nuclear war to begin; "although the superpowers are committed to involvement in Europe, the likelihood of some kind of war breaking out is greater in Korea than in Europe, and the superpowers are more likely to be drawn into conflict in Korea than in the Middle East, where they are avoiding direct confrontation." (Peter Hayes, "American Nuclear Dilemma in Korea", paper presented to the US-Korea Security Studies Council Conference in Seoul, December 3, 1987 [reported by Korean media], p. 1).

The arms build-up and nuclear stockpile is to maintain division and to deter mutual aggression. Thus peace with division is not only fragile but false. And we believe that the only way to achieve true peace is to bring about national reunification. We believe that peace is and should be the means toward reunification, and that peace is the end and the goal of reunification. We want to establish peace through the reunification of Korea, and we want to achieve reunification only by peaceful means.

## III

The Korean people do not want a permanent division. And we do not want to cancel this division by force, by means of a hot war or by means of subversive infiltrations. We tried once in 1950-1953, which led to the loss of 6 million human lives and made the wall of division even higher and stronger. Another such attempt would only trigger an all-out nuclear war which would surely wipe out the Korea people from the face of the earth. Neither do we want to keep this division, nor do we want the threat of war. We have no other way than peaceful means to approach national reunification. And to achieve reunification and to overcome our division by peaceful means is to bring about peace not only on but around the Korean peninsula.

In their declaration, the Korean Christians have proposed to the government authorities, both in the North and the South, in more specific terms to bring about peace that would be conducive to breaking down the walls of division and mutual mistrust and hatred. The National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) Declaration of 1988 proposed the following :

- a. In order to prevent war and reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula it is necessary to conclude a peace treaty and terminate the existing state of war. To this end it is urgent that the governments of North and South Korea, the United States, China, and

others who participated in the Korean conflict open negotiations designed to replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty which includes a non-aggression pact.

- b. At such time that a peace treaty is concluded, a verifiable state of mutual trust is restored between North and South Korea, and there are international guarantees of the peace and security of the entire Korean peninsula, then United States troops should be withdrawn and the United Nations Command in Korea should be dissolved.
- c. The excessive military rivalry between North and South Korea is the greatest obstacle to peaceful reunification and is moreover inimical to economic progress. Therefore, a parallel reduction in military strength must follow mutual negotiations between North and South, and the reductions in military preparations must be reflected in a greater commitment to industrial production for peace.
- d. Nuclear weapons must never be used under any circumstances, and as a matter of principle North and South Korea must unite to prevent any possibility of their use on the Korean peninsula. All nuclear weapons deployed on the peninsula or targeted in its direction must be removed.

#### IV

As soon as the Declaration was made public, strong attacks and criticisms were expressed within the conservative wing of the Protestant churches in Korea. The criticisms are centred around the peace issue : according to them, the withdrawal of the US troops will be detrimental to the peace and security of South Korea. They say that anyone who is arguing for the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea is serving the North Korean causes. A prominent Christian leader said in public that he would choose peace rather than reunification, and that in order to keep peace in Korea the presence of the US troops is essential. He believes, it seems, like many other Christian leaders in Korea, that in order to maintain peace in Korea, division and the military confrontation is inevitable. This is to show that Korean Christians are deeply influenced by the anti-Communist ideology and in fear of North Korea out of their experiences in the 1950 Korean war. This means that they want neither peace, nor reunification.

The Korean dilemma is precisely this : if military confrontation is continued and escalated, then there will be no chance to lower the walls of division. But if armaments are reduced, there will be a threat of mutual invasion and destruction which would lead to an all-out nuclear war. We cannot live on like this in a state of permanent division and separation, and at the same time we cannot continue to live under the constant threat of war. The basic problem which blocks the road to dialogue for reunification is, therefore, mutual mistrust. While maintaining the present *status quo* of division and military build-up, some measures of exchange of separated families and scholars and religious personnel have been suggested and worked out to increase the level of trust between the North and South. But such dialogues and exchanges alone do not necessarily lead to the reduction of arms and other vital peace measures. Therefore, it is necessary to work on both sides towards the build-up of mutual trust. That is, the mutual personal exchanges *and* reduction of arms. The World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee which met in Moscow in August 1989, made this point clearly. The statement, issued by the Central Committee on the peace and reunification issue of Korea, suggests that "As a contribution to the reduction of tensions and a sign of good faith, the USA should be pressed to remove immediately all nuclear weapons from Korean soil, and both the USA

and the USSR should be pressed also to remove all nuclear weapons aimed at Korea. This would open the way for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Korea.’

## V

At the same time, as the President of South Korea promised in his declaration of July 7, 1988, efforts should be made by both sides to open the ways to have various levels of exchanges of peoples : economic, scholarly, religious and cultural. In order to see this happen, both governments must change the existing laws to allow civilians to travel freely and safely cross the present line of division. At the moment, various attempts of South Korean Christians and students to visit the North have been regarded as violations of the National Security Law of the South, and have resulted only in people being thrown into prison.

Human rights issues in Korea are therefore closely connected with the issue of peace and reunification of Korea. In the 1970's and early 1980's human rights issues were a central part of the struggles of the Korean people for democracy against the military dictatorships. For under the military dictatorship no freedom of the press, no freedom of speech and publication, and no academic freedom was allowed. Anyone who opposed the dictatorship was accused of being a Communist, and tortured and put into prison. It has been argued that the military dictatorship is necessary, in order to maintain security and in order to have economic development to overcome the enemy in the North. And according to this logic of division, under the strong and stable military rule, freedom and democracy, labor union movements, freedom of the press and expression in arts and literature are denied, censored and banned. Gross social injustices under the divided systems are justified, and the voices and cries of the people for justice have been harshly repressed and destroyed. We, the Korean Christians, have now come to believe that our struggle for human rights and democracy and humanization cannot be achieved without removing this tragic cancer of national division.

In order to have the further development of democracy in Korea, we have to achieve some form of peace and reunification. And in order to work toward peace and reunification of Korea to overcome the present state of division, we must expand our human rights and democratic participation. As peace and reunification go hand in hand, democratization of Korea has to go with the process towards reunification of Korea. The Korean Christians therefore, demand the wider participation of the people in the process towards establishment of peace and national reunification. The national reunification process cannot be the monopoly of the governments in North and South. And the people's discussion on the national reunification issue should be open and free. Furthermore, the people's rights to knowledge and information about the other side of the division should not be banned arbitrarily. And multilateral exchanges of the people from both sides should be encouraged rather than punished by law.

I cannot state this point about the connection between human rights and democratization and the process towards reunification more succinctly than what the NCKC declaration has to say :

- a. Neither government, North or South, has the right to exercise a monopoly on information about the other nor to monopolize the discussion on reunification. Freedom of speech must be guaranteed so that the citizens of both North and South may participate freely in the discussion for establishing a policy of reunification, while there

must be realistic, institutional guarantees of the activities of civilian organizations in the research and discussion of the reunification issue.

- b. Both North and South Korea must permit maximum freedom for people who oppose either system or ideology to criticize freely according to their conscience and faith, and both must abide by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations' International Human Rights Covenant.

This is a clear and powerful expression of the Korean people's aspiration for peace and democracy towards reunification of the land and people of Korea. Peace without human rights and people's participation in politics and the vital matter of reunification of the nation — that peace is nothing but false peace. Peace which is to keep the division of the people and the land is also false peace, which leads only to the annihilation of the land and its people. Reunification without people's participation — that is only a reunification of slavery. A process towards reunification pushed by the power authorities, while imprisoning the efforts of reunification by the people — that process would lead nowhere but to solidify the present *status quo* of national division.

## VI

With the sound of trumpets proclaiming the Jubilee Year, we would like to see the Korean walls of division falling down; the wall of mutual hatred and mistrust, the gap between the rich and the poor, the oppressors and the oppressed, and the North and the South. And in this light, in our historical experience in Korea, we take the proclamation of this covenant of Jubilee Year very seriously, as Jesus from Galilee took it seriously in proclaiming the opening of his mission for the Kingdom of God.

# **BUMPER HARVEST OF ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT :**

## **IN THE SACRED ROAD FOR PEACE AND REUNIFICATION OF KOREA**

*Pastor Ko Gi Jun*

By the kind invitation of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the delegation of the Korean Christians Federation participated in the forum on peace and reunification of Korea held in Glion, Switzerland, in 1986 and 1988 and took part in the meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC held in Moscow in July this year.

We are grateful for the kindness, hospitality and ecumenical solidarity manifested by the WCC and we always remember this. In spite of various obstacles and difficulties, the WCC has shown deep interest in peace and the reunification of Korea and it is extending constant support to the just struggle of our people and Christians.

With the Tozanso Conference held in Japan in 1984, Glion meetings in 1986 and 1988, the declaration on peace and the reunification of Korea adopted at Second Glion meeting and the declaration adopted at Central Committee of the WCC held in Moscow, ecumenical solidarity with the Korean people has been most vividly affirmed.

We cannot forget the impressive scene of the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC held in Moscow. The declaration on the Korean question was adopted unanimously and the Conference Hall reverberated with enthusiastic applause on the historic occasion. Various personages of the WCC including General Secretary Emilio Castro and Ninan Koshy, Director of International Affairs, and Church delegates of various countries gave us warm embraces expressing their joy and congratulations.

It was an indication of active support and solidarity for peace and the reunification of our country and it gave us great encouragement. The policy declaration on the question of reunifying Korea on the basis of three principles of independence, peaceful reunification and the great national unity was adopted unanimously and it is the result of efforts by the WCC over a long period.



We had a historic meeting with South Korean fellow Christians in Glion, Switzerland in September 1986 for the first time since the Korean liberation August 15, 1945. Christians in the North and the South joined together in Christ and frankly discussed about reconciliation and unity of the nation and the cause of peaceful reunification of the country, the urgent desire of our nation. Through the Communion Service, we, once again, confirmed that we, who were separated from each other by barrier of division of 40 years, are the same brothers and sisters in Christ. This was one epoch-making event in the church history of our country.

Christians from the North and the South participating in the Glion meeting in November 1988 adopted the declaration on Korean peace and reunification and they decided to greet 1995 as the Year of Jubilee for the reunification and fixed the Sunday before 15 August each year as a common day of prayer for Korean reunification and agreed upon a common prayer text.

It reflected the ardent desire for reunification of the Christians in the North and the South and it made a great contribution to the cause of peace in our nation. Under the present circumstances when direct meetings and talks between the North and the South Christians are difficult, such advances cannot be realized if there are no active efforts of the WCC.

We highly respect the WCC, the authoritative international Christian organization in the world which has justice, peace and the integrity of creation as an ideal and leads the ecumenical movement. We are deeply grateful for its active support to the struggle of the Korean people and Christians for national reconciliation and unity.

Strengthening our friendship and bonds with the WCC and its member organizations, Christian Councils of Churches of various countries and the participation in the ecumenical movement have great significance for Korean peace and reunification and in realizing God's call to justice and peace.

We have the firm conviction that as in the past, in the future too, the WCC will give active support and solidarity to the sacred struggle of our people and Christians for the peaceful reunification of the country. We will pray with our whole hearts for rich fruits in the righteous work of the WCC.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”  
(Matthew 5:9)

Apostle Paul said “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap the harvest if we do not lose heart.” (Galatians 6:9)

The Korean Christians Federation, in Jesus Christ, “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (I Corinthians 1:10) will make great efforts for the national reconciliation, unity, peace, and the reunification of the country and also for the realization of the goals of the ecumenical movement.

# THE TOZANSO PROCESS :

## REFLECTIONS ON AN ECUMENICAL ADVENTURE

*Elizabeth Salter*

When the World Council of Churches, through the CCIA, called a consultation in Tozanso, Japan, towards the end of 1984, on “Peace and Justice in North-East Asia”, Korea had long been out of the front pages of the newspapers. The war which began along the 38th Parallel in late 1948, and which ended with the signing of the Armistice on 27 June 1953, left Korea devastated and cruelly divided. Attempts to solve the problem — notably the Geneva Conference of 1954 — were totally unsuccessful. If anything, positions within the two halves of divided Korea continued to harden. In the South, where it became a punishable offence even to speak of, let alone to work for, reunification, an authoritarian, industrial capitalist system had given rise to three successive dictatorships. In the North, the “juche” ideology of President Kim Il Sung, a self-reliant form of socialism, with no room for any kind of opposition, had virtually isolated the country from most of the rest of the world. The presence of 40,000 American troops, with their attendant nuclear weapons, along the heavily fortified border at the 38th Parallel, was seen by the North as a continuing provocation and obstacle to peace negotiations. Meanwhile, ten million families remained divided — totally isolated from each other by a wall of concrete and a wall of fear — and the world remained largely indifferent to their fate.

The Tozanso Consultation was the first attempt by the WCC to bring together Christians from a wide spectrum of member churches with Christians from Korea, to look at some of the issues raised by the division of their country. A number of Christians from the South attended, and although the Korean Christians Federation, from the North, was not able to be represented, it sent a message of support. The consultation’s first task was to create an ecumenical network for peace and reconciliation, and then to plan for actions which would help to break down the barriers, to further the process of change by democratic means, and to support Korean Christians in their attempts to achieve lasting peace and eventual reunification.

Several important papers were delivered at the Tozanso Consultation, but it was the human longing, the personal commitment of the participants — particularly the Koreans — which provided the real impetus for what came to be known as the “Tozanso

Process''. It was decided to seek to create an open and constructive relationship with both Christians and government in the DPRK. A year later, in November 1985, Ninan Koshy and Erich Weingärtner visited the DPRK and established the first direct contacts with the Korean Christians Federation and the official Committee on the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland. And a year later, in September 1986, in the beautiful, tranquil setting of Glion, overlooking the Lake of Geneva, the CCIA welcomed four Christians from the North and six from the South to an ecumenical Bible seminar on peace-making. None of us who were fortunate enough to be present will forget the extraordinary moment when, for the first time for nearly 40 years, Christians of a divided nation met and greeted each other.

There have been many such emotional moments in the history of the Tozanso Process, and, God willing, there will be many more. One was the witness of a Korean American, member of a delegation from the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA to North Korea, meeting his mother again for the first time since he left at the height of the war. Another was the experience of those of us who visited the North as members of a five-person delegation from the WCC, when we shared in house church worship one Sunday morning in Pyongyang, with men and women from the tiny, isolated community of Christians. Yet another was the scene of joy and overwhelming longing, one evening in Washington in April 1989, when, at a meeting called by the NCCCUSA for more than a hundred participants, church leaders from both North and South were lifted high into the air as everyone sang and danced their hopes for the future.

And undergirding the moments of emotion and elation has been the steady, patient work of those who believe in the process and who are prepared to labour to see it come to fruition. From the many discussions with government and church leaders in both North and South, (including an important international consultation on Justice and Peace, held in April 1988 in Incheon, South Korea, and organized by the NCCCK, the Christian Conference of Asia and the WCC, as well as a second WCC meeting in Glion in November 1988 for delegates from North and South Korea and Christians from other countries) have come historic declarations of principle and calls to action. The Incheon Conference recognized that "all share the sin of rebellion against God which lies at the root of brokenness and division in human community", and called on the churches of the world to join Korean Christians in North and South in an annual day of prayer for peaceful reunification. The date chosen was the Sunday before 15th August each year, and the day of prayer would be a preparation for the biblical Jubilee Year of 1995 — 50 years after the division. Who knows what will have become possible by then ?

The statement which came out of the Glion meeting was a historic one, prepared as it was by delegates from both North and South. The process was long and sometimes painful, but its support for the Common Day of Prayer for Peace, and its reaffirmation of the three guiding principles for "the unification of the motherland", namely "independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity" are backed by detailed recommendations to governments, to the Korean people, and to the world-wide Christian community. These, too, form the basis of an important background paper and policy statement on "Peace and the Reunification of Korea" approved by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Moscow in July 1989.

In close cooperation with Korean Christians from both South and North, the World Council of Churches, through the CCIA, has, since the Tozanso Consultation, sought

not only to bring the two communities together, but to highlight their constant, pressing concerns to the world outside, and in particular to the ecumenical community. Now concerned Christians in many different parts of the world are responding to the Tozanso process, and to the many declarations and calls to action made on behalf of the Korean people. Certainly no-one who has ever stood on either side of that "middle wall of partition", which runs relentlessly along the length of the 38th Parallel, could ever be indifferent to the suffering and injustice it represents. Visits have been paid to North Korea and to the Korean Christians Federation by delegations from National Councils of Churches in both Japan and Canada. The Washington meeting called by the NCCC-USA in 1989 brought together many Korean Americans and other Christians, with widely differing perceptions about the North. It enabled them to meet freely with North Korean Christians ( who were also able to visit several denominational headquarters during their stay in the USA), to discuss freely with them, and to make plans to implement some of the recommendations made in the NCC policy statement of 1986.

In Europe, where historic ties with Korea are not so strong as in the USA, there has nevertheless been a determined effort on the part of a number of concerned Christians to put Korea back on the ecumenical agenda. The Olympic Games of 1989 proved to be providential; suddenly everyone was talking about Korea ! The European Ecumenical Network on Korea, established in 1987, brings together on a regular basis the staff of European church organisations responsible for relations with Korea, together with some other NGOs and solidarity groups. The Catholic Institute for International Relations and the Korea Ecumenical Education Programme, both based in England, published in 1989 a helpful booklet on "The Reunification of Korea" on behalf of the Network.

And it is likely that the momentous events taking place in Central and Eastern Europe, together with the policy of glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union, leading to the end of the Cold War and far-reaching changes in East-West relations, will inevitably lead to changes in international relations in other parts of the world too. Economic pressures apart, can North Korea remain isolated and South Korea continue to maintain large numbers of American troops on her soil when the super-powers are engaged in serious talks about reducing armies and weapons in Europe ? With the Berlin Wall rapidly turning into a happy hunting ground for souvenir seekers, what future is there for the wall along the 38th Parallel ? There is clear evidence that the steady witness of the church, and her stubborn stand for peace and justice in East Germany, in Poland, in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere, were telling factors in the eventual breakthrough of the forces of democracy. Can the Church in Korea, where the clash of two political ideologies and the pressure from outside have kept the two halves of a divided country apart for so long, be the leaven in the dough for Korea too ?

At the house church service we attended in Pyongyang, as delegates from the WCC in November 1987, Pastor Kim Un Bong read from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 4 : "Spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives." God's call to work for the unity of all people has found a ready response in the commitment of a growing number of Christians to seeking peace, justice and reunification for Korea. And in this commitment, the Tozanso process has been a key factor. In the view of many, myself included, it is one of the most significant initiatives ever undertaken by the WCC. For all that has been accomplished thus far, we give thanks to God, and to those who have been faithful witnesses in that search for unity.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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- Pastor Ko Gi Jun : Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the Korean Christians Federation, Pyongyang
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# APPENDIX I

## THE NORTH-SOUTH PEACE AGREEMENT OF JULY 4th, 1972

The three main points of the Communiqué read as follows :

The two sides have agreed to the following three principles for unification of the fatherland :

First, unification shall be achieved through independent Korean efforts without being subject to external imposition or interference.

Second, unification shall be achieved through peaceful means, and not through the use of force against each other.

Third, as a homogeneous people, a great national unity shall be sought above all, transcending differences in ideas, ideologies, and systems.

The Communiqué further agreed upon these points and ended as follows :

1. In order to ease tensions and foster an atmosphere of mutual trust between the South and the North, the two sides have agreed not to slander or defame each other, not to undertake armed provocations, whether on a large or small scale, and to take positive measures to prevent inadvertent military incidents.
2. The two sides, in order to restore severed national ties, to promote mutual understanding, and to expedite independent peaceful unification, have agreed to carry out various exchanges in many fields.
3. The two sides have agreed to cooperate positively with each other to seek an early success of the South-North Red Cross talks, which are underway, with the fervent expectations of the entire people.
4. The two sides, in order to prevent the outbreak of unexpected military incidents and to deal directly, promptly and accurately with problems arising between the South and North, have agreed to install direct telephone lines between Seoul and Pyongyang.
5. The two sides, in order to implement the aforementioned agreed items, solve various problems existing between the South and North, and to settle the unification problem on the basis of the agreed principles for unification of the Fatherland, have agreed to establish and operate a South-North Coordinating Committee co-chaired by Director Fu Rak Lee and Director Young Joo Kim.
6. The two sides, firmly convinced that the aforementioned agreed items correspond with the common aspirations of the entire people, who are anxious to see an early unification of the Fatherland, hereby solemnly pledge before the entire Korean people that they will faithfully carry out these agreed items.

## APPENDIX II

### GLION DECLARATION ON PEACE AND THE REUNIFICATION OF KOREA

(translation from the Korean original)

And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts,  
because it is for this that you were called  
together as parts of one body.  
Colossians 3:15

#### I. INTRODUCTION

An international consultation on the churches' role in reducing tensions and realizing peace and the reunification of Korea was held in Glion, Switzerland from 23 to 25 November 1988. Attending the meeting were delegates of churches from many parts of the world (Canada, USA, France, Federal Republic of Germany, USSR, Australia, Japan, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands) including a seven-member delegation of the Korean Christians Federation (KCF) and eleven delegates from the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK). They joined in worship, Christian fellowship, Bible Study and Holy Communion. They also engaged actively in dialogue and exchange of opinions through presentations and discussions.

Organized by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the meeting was the second consultation on peace and the reunification of Korea to be held under WCC auspices. The first Glion meeting (Seminar on the Biblical and Theological Foundation of Christian Concern for Peace) took place in September 1986.

The consultation commends the WCC for its special efforts for peace and the reunification of Korea, and supports the spirit and recommendations of the WCC Consultation on Peace and Justice in North-East Asia, held in Tozanso, Japan, in 1984. It also supports the policy statement of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA on peace and the reunification of Korea issued in 1986, and the message of the International Christian Consultation on Peace and Reunification of Korea held in Inchon, Korea, in April, 1988.

#### II. AFFIRMATION

We believe that God is the Lord of History, creating history anew in every situation, and the judge of all human history. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, rejected the deceptive peace built on power, and condemned human greed and arrogance. We believe that the Holy Spirit, working against the human divisions of hostility and hatred, is calling us into a holy community founded on the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the basis of our common affirmation of faith, we have reflected at this consultation on the 43 years of Korean division, characterized by attitudes opposing peace and reunification. In reflecting on this history, we confess before God and humanity our past errors. For the past 40 years, the Korean people have had the division of their country imposed upon them against their will by foreign powers. Koreans have paid a high price during this period : the Korean war and subsequent hostility and mistrust between and among themselves.

Some are led to believe that the suffering of the Korean people comes from their own fault, that the military build-up in the Korean peninsula is necessary for peace in an uncertain world, that the building of ideological blocs could ensure our preparedness for world peace. But we realize now that such perceptions were the distortions resulting from the long-term imposition of a cold-war mentality lasting over 40 years.

We believe that the Korean people have the right to form a unified country and to enjoy living harmoniously as one people. They are furthermore the sole subject in achieving such goals. We believe that we are called to be the apostles of peace, and therefore we affirm that we will strengthen our solidarity with the Korean people's efforts for peace and the reunification of their country. We believe that the Holy Spirit will open our hearts, overcome our hatred and hostility, pull us out of helplessness and frustration, strengthen us in hope and make us able to face the challenges before us.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

We affirm the following principles and guidelines for peace and the reunification of Korea, committing ourselves to engage in these tasks together with the Korean people.

1. We support the decision of churches in both North and South Korea to observe 1995 as the Year of Jubilee for Unification, and to observe the Sunday before 15 August each year as a common Day of Prayer for Peace, for which we have adopted a common prayer text. We request the WCC to recommend to its member churches to join in prayer with the Korean churches by observing this Sunday.
2. We reaffirm the three guiding principles for the "unification of the motherland", agreed between the North and South Korean governments in 1972, namely "independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity". We also confirm that the reunification process must honour and guarantee two existing systems in the spirit of peaceful coexistence, with the objective of building up one reunified country.
3. We affirm that the subject of the Korean reunification process is the people (*minjung*) themselves, in both parts of the peninsula. Any foreign forces which have been involved in the division are therefore considered as stumbling blocks for peaceful reunification and should be removed. We also affirm that reunification should be carried out through a process of democratic participation by all members of the Korean nation.
4. In order to build peace in North-East Asia, including the Korean peninsula, it is necessary to achieve the reunification of the Korea. We therefore oppose any attempt to legitimize the *status quo* of division. We believe those attempts to be a quasi-peace; we therefore oppose any proposed alternatives or measures that fix the division as a matter of fact.



5. We believe that for the sake of the peaceful reunification of Korea, it is imperative to build confidence between North and South, which have been separated for several decades. We therefore recommend to the churches of both North and South to engage in special efforts to overcome hostility and hatred, thereby creating an atmosphere of forgiveness and reconciliation. We request, furthermore, that the worldwide Christian community help to build confidence through a variety of approaches, including the enlisting of cooperation by international organizations such as the United Nations, keeping firmly to the guidelines established in the Tozanso Consultation regarding ecumenical coordination of contacts.
6. We demand a radical reduction of military forces, weapons and facilities in order to reduce tension and avoid military confrontation, thereby eliminating a major threat to peace and the reunification of Korea. For this, the present armistice agreement should be replaced by a peace treaty, a non-aggression declaration should be agreed upon, and substantial guarantees for peace and security should be provided for the whole Korean peninsula. On the basis of such measures, all foreign forces, including the US forces in South Korea, must be withdrawn, the United Nations Command in South Korea must be dissolved, and all nuclear weapons deployed or targeted upon the Korean peninsula must be removed.
7. More than 10 million people remain separated from their loved ones through the division of Korea. It is a humane and moral imperative to help them to be reunited and to open many forms of contact between the two parts of the country. Reunion of families and contacts will continue to be obstructed as long as military and political confrontation is not overcome. The reunion of separated families must be accomplished in such a way as to promote the reunification of the nation, and not perpetuate division.
8. We request that the World Council of Churches, in close collaboration with the Korean Christians Federation and the National Council of Churches in Korea, continue to work for peace and reunification in the Korean peninsula.

*The Lord says, my plans for you are peace, not disaster, reserving a future full of hope for you. Then when you call to me and come to plead with me, I will listen to you... I will bring you back to the place from which I exiled you.*

*Jeremiah 29:11, 12, 14*

Glion, Switzerland  
25 November 1988

# APPENDIX III

## PEACE AND THE REUNIFICATION OF KOREA BACKGROUND

### I. INTRODUCTION

The significance of the situation in the Korean peninsula for global peace and justice cannot be overstated. A victim of colonialism and World War II, Korea became the first victim of the Cold War. For decades, churches and Christian communities in Korea have been urging the ecumenical movement for support and solidarity in their efforts to find solutions to problems which are not of their own making. In light of the vocation of the church to promote peace, reconciliation and unity, and the ecumenical task of reaching out to separated and isolated Christian communities, the time is ripe for a review of past ecumenical stances and new, bold initiatives for peace and the reunification of Korea.

The World Council of Churches' involvement in Korea is a long and complex one. When the Korean war broke out in 1950, the WCC Central Committee issued a statement which stressed that an on-the-spot United Nations Commission should identify the aggressor. It supported the United Nations for authorizing a "police measure" and emphasized action for a "just settlement by negotiation and reconciliation".

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs worked closely with the United Nations, contributing to the establishment of the "Peace Observation Commission" by the 1950 UN General Assembly. The CCIA held consultations with church leaders in Korea and served as an intermediary between contending parties within the United Nations forces closely working with US officials. The development and expansion of a church-sponsored programme of relief in Korea increased the importance of a close liaison between the WCC and the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency.

Unfortunately, these initiatives came under considerable criticism as being biased towards Western and South Korean positions. Support for the United Nations meant in effect supporting the role of the USA, whose military forces fought in the Korean war under the United Nations flag and still make up the bulk of the United Nations General Command.

An unfortunate consequence of this position was the resignation of Mr. T.C. Chao, president of the WCC from China, and the withdrawal of the member churches in China from participation in the WCC. It also meant lack of possibility of contacts with the Christian community in North Korea.

In the intervening years, the WCC's main concentration has been on relations with member churches in the Republic of (South) Korea (ROK). This has included actions of solidarity with the struggle of the churches for human rights and democratization in view of the succession of dictatorships which have ruled the South since the war.

The reunification of Korea was a subject which could not be openly addressed by member churches in the ROK because of government restrictions, a factor which for many years prevented the WCC from following up on its earlier intensive involvement. A rather unexpected joint communiqué issued by the governments of both North and South Korea on 4 July 1972 provided the opportunity for the WCC to reiterate its concern. The WCC General Secretary sent a message to the leaders of the two governments at that time, welcoming the plans for negotiations between them.

The optimism with which the joint communiqué was greeted was unfortunately short-lived. It was not until 1984 that the WCC again took up the question of the reunification of Korea in a public way in the course of an international consultation on Peace and Justice in North-East Asia, held in Tozanso, Japan, organized by the CCIA. Invited to it were church leaders from all countries directly affected by the Korean conflict. Though it was not possible for them to send a delegation, the (North) Korean Christians Federation (KCF) sent a message, wishing the Consultation success. The Consultation set in motion what has come to be known as the "Tozanso process": an ecumenical initiative the immediate aim of which was to create a forum for Christians of North and South Korea to meet face to face, and to contribute towards efforts for peace and the reunification of the divided Korean peninsula.

## **II. THE DIVISION OF KOREA AND ITS HUMAN COST**

During 2500 years of recorded history, Korea has been trampled by conquering armies, subjugated by foreign powers, forced into unwilling alliances, occupied and humiliated. The Korean concept "han" expresses the anguish and determination of the suffering "minjung", the people whose hunger and thirst for righteousness can be sated only when justice and peace prevail.

Despite the fact that Korea has been a victim of expansionist power struggle, neither the land nor the people of Korea was ever divided in the thirteen centuries preceding 1945. Koreans share a common ancestry, history, tradition, language and culture. They also share, even after 45 years of division, a profound yearning for reunification.

In the late 19th century, Korea became the target of colonial aspirations on the part of Great Britain, France, Germany, the USA, Russia, China and Japan. Japan fought two wars — one with China in 1895 and one with Russia in 1903 — for supremacy over Korea. With the acquiescence of the European powers and the USA, Japan annexed Korea in 1910. Korea became the unwilling supplier of labour, food, raw material and armaments for Japan's drive to subjugate Manchuria, China, Indochina and the Pacific. The hardships suffered by the Korean people since then surpassed those of any other period in their long history. Japan attempted to destroy every vestige of Korean identity.

The tenacity with which Koreans resisted foreign rule foreshadowed the determination with which students, workers and the churches have opposed dictatorial rule in Korea since World War II. In 1919 and 1929, major popular revolts were brutally suppressed. Independence movements continued their activities in clandestine operations or engaged in guerilla raids from bases in Manchuria and Siberia. Resistance against Japan brought together Koreans of all political and religious persuasions, including Christians who were engaged at the heart of this struggle.

On 15 August 1945, Japanese imperial rule came to an abrupt end. Though Koreans celebrated this liberation as the opportunity to establish a unified national government free from outside interference, they would have to learn yet again that the intentions of friends, neighbours and “liberators” could not be trusted.

Out of the devastation of Europe and Japan, and a China destabilized by civil strife, the USA and the USSR emerged as post-war superpowers, jealously guarding an intent on expanding their spheres of influence. With Europe already divided, East and West, control of the Korean peninsula became crucial for the strategically important East-Asian region. Fearing therefore that their converging armies might inadvertently bring them into direct confrontation, the USA and the USSR agreed in advance that Korea be divided temporarily at the 38th Parallel for the purpose of disarming the Japanese forces.

Koreans suffered bitter disappointment as they witnessed numerous attempts to create a unified government end in failure. The way in which the ensuing history unfolded is itself a matter of lively controversy. A neutral or objective reading is not yet possible. The division of Korea has become so deeply embedded that it has driven a wedge even in historical perception. What is however clear is that the division was imposed from outside.

In retrospect it must be admitted that the United Nations was not an impartial mediator. It became party to the rapidly developing Korean conflict when it formalized the division by giving international legal status to a plebiscite held only in the South, still under US military rule. This led to the creation on 15 August 1948 of the Republic of Korea, headed by Syngman Rhee, backed by the USA, soon to be followed on 9 September by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea under Kim Il Sung, backed by the Soviet Union and a year later by the newly-established People’s Republic of China.

Tragically, despite their strong desire for unification, Koreans soon found themselves in a new war whose ferocity has few parallels, to this day. From 1950 to 1953, more bombs were dropped on Korea than all bombs used in the European theatre during World War II. The exact number of casualties will never be known, but they were several millions.

But grief over the dead, and the immense task of rebuilding devastated cities and rehabilitating the countless physically and psychologically wounded were not the only consequences of this pointless war. Far from solving the problem of division, the war had intensified it. In the massive movement of refugees trying to escape the war zones, the number of those who became separated from their family members reached some 10 million.

For a brief period, the terms of the Armistice Agreement which ended the hostilities held out some hope that the will of the Korean people for unification might yet prevail. Signed by the military commanders of the DPRK and the USA (representing the United Nations forces) on 27 July 1953, the Agreement stipulated that within three months, a political conference of a higher level would settle outstanding issues such as the withdrawal of foreign forces and the peaceful resolution of the Korean conflict through negotiation.

Such a conference was never held. Technically, the USA is still at war with North Korea, 36 years after the Agreement. And the 38th Parallel has become the most impenetrable border in the world. Neither mail service nor telephone lines offer a respite from this permanent isolation. Radio and television waves are regularly jammed in both directions. Contacts with North Koreans are still serious offenses punishable under the ROK's anti-communist laws, in spite of some laxity shown by the government occasionally. There have been similar restrictions in the North also.

Family separation has been particularly widespread among Christians, many of whom fled South out of a fear of atheistic communism. Though Roman Catholicism — which first brought Christianity to Korea some 200 years ago — flourished mainly in the South, Protestantism, which arrived in Korea 100 years later, centred primarily in the North. Pyongyang, which became the capital of the DPRK, used to be called the “Jerusalem” of Korean Christianity. The war changed all this. Christian churches in the ROK are among the fastest-growing in the world. In the DPRK, a small, very isolated Christian community survived, worshipping in house churches and organized in the Korean Christians Federation.

As the years pass, the number of those who can remember their separated relatives — mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, siblings — being to diminish. Those born after the war are beginning to take on responsible positions in both societies. But the yearning of the people for reunification has been passed on to the younger generation. Free from the traumas which characterized the generation of their parents, they are lending a new urgency to the question of peace and the reunification of Korea.

### **III. THE PRESENT SITUATION**

Korea remains one of the most militarized countries of the world. Both North and South Korea claim that the other side has the advantage in military personnel. What is certain, according to even conservative figures, is that 1.5 million heavily-armed troops face each other across the divide in a country whose combined population is under 60 million. To this must be added the 40,000 US troops stationed in South Korea, as well as the highly sophisticated armaments and arsenals arrayed on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

This status quo in Korea remains extremely dangerous, not only to the Koreans, but to the world at large. In no other region is the prospect of nuclear war more conceivable than in Korea. Any armed conflict in Korea would immediately involve both super-powers, and a rapid escalation into a world conflagration cannot be ruled out. The possible use of nuclear weapons in Korea has been a matter of discussion by the US military leaders from the time of the Korean war, when President Truman publicly threatened nuclear attack. While no information on such discussions on the Soviet side has been published, it may be assumed that similar possibilities have been considered as part of nuclear deterrence.

Nuclear artillery, mines and missiles began to be deployed by the USA near the DMZ in the South from 1958 to the present. Since 1983, nuclear weapons strategies have been reportedly tested in the USA's annual “Team Spirit” exercises which involve 200,000 troops. Although there are no such weapons deployed in North Korea, the USSR has nuclear missiles stationed in Siberia just across the border, some of which have been targeted at South Korea. This excessively volatile situation has received far too little

attention from the world community, partly because of the United Nations' peculiar position as a party in the conflict.

The division of Korea has also had heavy political costs. The political systems on both sides of the divide have justified authoritarian forms of government in the name of security and stability. In the North, the "juche" ideology of President Kim Il Sung, a "self-reliant" form of socialism, countenances no opposition. South Korea's industrial capitalist system has exploited workers and spawned three successive dictatorships, only recently to give way to a fledgling parliamentary democracy. But the people on both sides have never given up their hope and struggle for a lasting peace and the prospect of reunification.

#### **IV. SIGNS OF HOPE**

Relations between the ROK and the DPRK have followed an erratic path of progress and setbacks. In an atmosphere of intense distrust, initiatives and accusations seem to go hand in hand. A positive round in North-South dialogue coincided with the WCC's "Tozanso initiative". In September 1984, the South accepted the North's offer of aid for flood victims. This led to three Red Cross talks, a series of economic discussions, two preliminary meetings between ROK and DPRK parliamentarians and a historic exchange visit of 50 separated families in September 1985.

Tensions mounted in the following years over the USA's Team Spirit exercises, the effort by the DPRK to co-host the 1988 Olympics and the downing of Korean Air Lines flight 858 in November 1987, which South Korea blames on the action of two North Korean agents.

Following the successful struggle by the South Korean people to end President Chun Doo Hwan's dictatorial rule and tentative steps to restore parliamentary democracy in 1988, as well as the Olympic Games in Seoul, a series of new initiatives have been set in motion. ROK President Roh Tae Woo launched what he called a "spring of reconciliation between the South and the North". Inter-parliamentary talks between North and South Korea resumed on 13 October 1988 with a number of useful proposals advanced by both sides. These were underlined in speeches at the UN General Assembly on 18 and 19 October by representatives of the two governments.

The new willingness by South Korea's government to engage in dialogue with the North came about following intensive pressures exerted by students, workers and the churches. Reunification was espoused as a central policy of all parties contesting recent elections in the ROK. In January 1989, a newly-founded National Democratic Movement Federation, combining major labour, social and religious organizations, made reunification its major goal.

These initiatives were preceded by the courageous work of WCC member churches and the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK). For a number of years, these have worked intensively in committees formulating policies on peace and reunification. In September 1986, in Glion, Switzerland, representatives of WCC member churches and the NCCCK took part in CCIA-sponsored encounters with Christians from North Korea, the first since division. This happened with the acquiescence of both governments, though technically in violation of South Korea's National Security Law, which makes contact with North Korea a capital offence.

In February 1988, the National Council of Churches in Korea unanimously passed a "Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace" which gave the struggle for reunification a theological underpinning, confessed the sin of hatred within division, affirmed basic principles for national reunification, proposed tasks for both governments of Korea, and committed the churches of Korea to a programme of action towards a "Jubilee Year for Peace and Reunification" in 1995, the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Korea.

In April 1988, an "International Christian Consultation on Justice and Peace in Korea" was held in Inchon, Korea, under the auspices of the NCCCK and co-sponsored by the WCC and the Christian Conference of Asia. Its 320 participants from 17 countries around the world proposed further steps in the implementation of the NCCCK Declaration, underlining, among other things, the importance of international ecumenical solidarity in the struggle for the reunification of Korea.

The proposals from the NCCCK Declaration were welcomed by the KCF and North Korean Christian delegates at the second CCIA-sponsored consultation on peace and reunification at Glion, Switzerland, 23-25 November 1988. The "Glion Declaration on Peace and the Reunification of Korea" supported the decision of churches in both North and South Korea to observe 1995 as the Year of Jubilee for Unification, and to observe each year a Common Day of Prayer for Peace.

Since the division of Korea was brought about by international complicity, the international community bears at least some of the burden for Korea's reunification. The ecumenical community has acknowledged this in a number of initiatives taken in countries directly or indirectly concerned. After the initial visit by a WCC delegation in 1985, ecumenical delegations from the USA, Japan and Canada have visited North Korea. These visits have helped to break, to some extent, the isolation of the small Christian community in North Korea. Representatives of the Korean Christians Federation have participated in meetings of the CCIA, Christian Peace Conference and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA). In the KCF the ecumenical community has found a responsible partner for efforts for reunification. There are now opportunities for public worship for Christians in North Korea with the building of two churches.

A major policy statement on "Peace and the Reunification of Korea" was issued by the NCCCUSA in 1986. Similar statements have been made by member churches in the USA and Canada.

All these hopeful signs and events have coincided with developments in the global situation which may have a positive effect on the Korean peninsula. The rapprochement between China and the USA and, more recently, the reduction in tensions between the USSR and the USA and improvement in relations between the USSR and the People's Republic of China have created an atmosphere more conducive to the solution of regional conflicts. In addition, the ROK has opened trade relations with a number of countries in the socialist bloc. The DPRK is also attempting to have more international contacts.

In these developments, there seems to be a greater interest in economic relations and the reduction of military tensions, at the expense of political and ideological issues which have until now claimed priority. If these trends continue, the logical and

emotional *raison-d'être* of division will be undermined. The time for bold action for peace and reunification is therefore at hand.

## V. STEPS TOWARDS REUNIFICATION

In the proposals and counterproposals which have been advanced in dialogues between North and South Korea over several decades, one of the major obstacles has been the perception of the motives of each side by the other. The interest of each government to appear genuinely desirous of reunification is clear, but each side questions the other's real intentions. The two social and political systems have grown in such diametrically opposing directions that it is difficult to visualize a reunification which will not cause radical changes in either one or both parts of Korea.

Thus the ROK government continues to reject DPRK proposals as aiming to weaken the South in order eventually to be able to "communize" it by force or by subversion, whereas the DPRK rejects ROK proposals as leading in the direction of a two-Koreas policy of permanent division. For example, both governments now agree that there should be a joint non-aggression declaration between North and South. The DPRK wishes such a document to be adopted by a joint North-South parliamentary session, whereas the ROK insists that the finalization should await a summit meeting between the heads of state. The difference clearly lies in the question as to whether this is an internal debate within one nation (an optic preferred by the North) or a negotiation between two sovereign states (the Southern view).

And yet it seemed relatively easy for the two sides to agree on the three guiding principles in their joint declaration of July 1972 :

1. National Independence (i.e. that Koreans alone should decide their future);
2. Peaceful Reunification (i.e. through dialogue and negotiation, not war or aggression); and
3. Great National Unity (i.e. transcending ideological or systematic divisions).

These clearly should be the starting point of any steps towards peace and the reunification of Korea. Further steps were outlined by both sides at the 1988 session of the United Nations General Assembly.

These proposals and others made since then, such as the North's suggestion that the UN Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea oversee a mutual troop reduction, offer ample possibilities for fruitful dialogue, provided that the two parties maintain a flexible and constructive attitude and deal with each other in good faith.

Both sides have affirmed that the decision to divide Korea was imposed from the outside. Both sides have recognized that the hostile confrontation along the Korean armistice line continues to be a source of danger which could trigger hostilities involving the whole world. Both sides have also acknowledged that there is today a new international climate conducive to peace-making and have expressed a willingness to discuss arms reductions and a non-aggression agreement.

There is today a new opportunity for the ecumenical community to intensify its support to the work of the churches and Christians in both parts of Korea for peace and the reunification of their tragically divided country.

(Background Paper, Central Committee, Moscow 1989)



# APPENDIX IV

## PEACE AND THE REUNIFICATION OF KOREA

### POLICY STATEMENT

(adopted by the WCC Central Committee July 1989)

I. In its "Statement on Peace and Justice", the World Council of Churches' Sixth Assembly affirmed that

"The churches today are called to confess anew their faith, and to repent for the times when Christians have remained silent in the face of injustice or threats to peace. The biblical vision of peace with justice for all, of wholeness, of unity for all God's people is not one of several options for the followers of Christ. It is an imperative in our time."

The yearning for peace, justice and unity converges most poignantly and in a unique manner in the case of Korea. The Korean people have been divided by foreign forces, and remain divided by force and have been submitted to coercive systems of control which perpetuate this division and are justified by it. Opposing conceptions of justice have been created and systematized in Korea, where "security" imposes a continual state of confrontation. A so-called "peace" is maintained at the cost of the largest concentration of military force in the world. Peculiar notions of justice are maintained at the cost of the right of the Korean people to decide their own destiny. Korea remains technically at war, and so long as millions of families remain separated, there can be no claim that justice has been achieved.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ compels Christians and churches in the ecumenical community to engage every effort to overcome division and bring about shalom, a true peace where righteousness and well-being prevail. The biblical passage found in Ephesians 2:14-16 reflects clearly the hopes and promise of the long-suffering Korean people :

"He is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh those commandments and ordinances that divide human beings. That he might create in himself one new human being in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end."

The WCC confesses that it has not always dealt equitably with the Korean question. Mistakes of the past should weigh on the conscience of the ecumenical community and intensify our determination to struggle for peace and the reunification of Korea. As the WCC's Tozanso consultation on "Peace and Justice in North-East Asia" states,

"The churches are called to provide hope, to witness for peace, justice and unity. They must become a model of dialogue and participation for all who have been affected by the tragedy of division. Christians must surround one another in love, supporting one another in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

II. Reaffirming the Tozanso principles of ecumenical coordination in these pursuits, the WCC commends the efforts of many churches and ecumenical organizations which have already engaged themselves actively and responsibly in pursuing contacts with Christians in the DPRK, while at the same time maintaining intimate liaison with partner churches and the NCCK in the ROK.

The WCC also commends its Korean member churches and the NCCK for their courageous pursuit of human rights and democratization in Korea, as well as their eagerness, despite severe difficulties, to encourage the WCC's contacts with North Korea and to participate in the two historic Glion meetings involving delegations from both North and South. The WCC warmly welcomes the NCCK historic "Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace", of February 1988 and the "Message of the International Christian Consultation on Justice and Peace in Korea" of April 1988, which constitute important stages in the Tozanso process. It also commends the initiatives taken by women in the Korean churches.

The WCC commends the Korean Christians Federation for its active participation in the ecumenical efforts for peace and the reunification of Korea. It welcomes the new opportunities that the Christian community in the North has for wider ecumenical contacts as well as for public worship.

The WCC pledges to continue to work in the spirit of the Tozanso process to facilitate contacts and to act as a channel of communication between the Christian communities of North and South Korea, as long as this communication cannot be carried on directly. It recognizes the special role of the Christian Conference of Asia and churches in Japan, the USA, the USSR and the People's Republic of China and Korean Christian communities abroad in this regard. Considering the crucial role of the USA in Korea, the work of the NCCCUSA including the policy statement on "Peace and Reunification of Korea" provides a positive example of ecumenical solidarity and cooperation.

The WCC instructs the CCIA to continue to monitor and analyse the situations in both parts of Korea, as well as developments in the region, and in the international community of nations, as far as the Korean issue is concerned. The CCIA is requested to work closely with inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and to engage itself actively in the United Nations for the promotion of peace and the reunification of Korea.

III. In this context, the WCC encourages all member churches and related agencies and councils to initiate or redouble efforts to persuade their respective governments to review their Korea policies and bring them in line with the objectives of peace, justice and reunification. The WCC recommends the following elements as priority considerations :

1. The people of Korea should be the ultimate subjects in decisions affecting their future, without outside interference or tutelage. The reunification of Korea should be carried out through a process of democratic participation by all members of the Korean nation.
2. All parties concerned should be called upon to commit themselves to the principles contained in the joint North-South declaration of 4 July 1972, namely "independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity". The USA, USSR, Japan and China in particular should be pressed to state

clearly their intention to pursue the reunification of Korea as a matter of national policy.

3. The reunification process should respect and recognize the reality of the two existing autonomous systems in the spirit of peaceful coexistence, with the objective of building up one unified country. Any proposal implying the permanent division of Korea should be rejected.
4. A radical reduction of military forces, facilities and weapons should be sought on the Korean peninsula in order to eliminate one of the major threats to regional and world peace. The scaling-down of military exercises and the signing of non-aggression declarations could be useful contributions to such force reductions.
5. As a contribution to the reduction of tensions and a sign of good faith, the USA should be urged to remove immediately all nuclear weapons from Korean soil, and both the USA and the USSR should be urged also to remove all nuclear weapons aimed at Korea. This would open the way for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Korea.
6. The USA, which along with the DPRK is a co-signatory of the 1953 Armistice Agreement, should be encouraged to cooperate in negotiating a peace treaty which could create conditions leading towards the withdrawal of its military forces from the peninsula.
7. A fresh, truly impartial initiative should be launched by the United Nations in an effort to rectify its historical legacy of bias and complicity in Korea's division. Serious consideration should be given to the proposal that the United Nations Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea oversee a mutual troop reduction by North and South Korea.
8. Both North and South Korea should be pressed to find solutions to outstanding humanitarian problems, foremost the tragic situation of millions of separated families. With due recognition that this is an extremely complex problem, open to political misuse and whose solution should not contribute to the perpetuation of division, all parties to the conflict must be urgently reminded of the humane and moral imperative of finding appropriate mechanisms to open many and varied forms of contact between the two parts of the country.

IV. Reaffirming the "Glion Declaration on Peace and the Reunification of Korea", the WCC supports the decision of churches in both North and South Korea to observe 1995 as the "Year of Jubilee for Unification" and recommends that all WCC member churches and associate ecumenical councils and conferences join in prayer with the Korean churches by observing the Common Day of Prayer.

As one step towards the Jubilee Year, the WCC should explore the possibility of direct reciprocal ecumenical visits between North and South Korea.

The WCC urges all member churches and ecumenical bodies to help Korean Christians in their struggle for peace and the reunification of their people by engaging in activities of solidarity which may include the following elements :

1. Establish or maintain contact with churches and Christians in both parts of Korea. Such contacts should promote the building of confidence between

North and South by providing first-hand information, thus contributing to an atmosphere of trust and reconciliation.

2. In planning contacts and visits to North Korea, it is important to respect the non-denominational character of Christian life there. The Tozanso guidelines, which state that all such visits be undertaken in consultation with the WCC and the CCA, should be observed. Visits should be ecumenical both in composition and sponsorship. Visits should be followed up, where possible, with reciprocal invitations to North Korean Christians. Churches in socialist countries carry a special burden in helping North Korean to overcome their isolation.
3. The production and wide dissemination of information about Korea, both within the churches and where possible to the wider public, continues to be essential, given the fact that general knowledge about the Korean situation is grossly inadequate. Such information should include the NCCCK "Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace" and the "Glion Declaration on Peace and the Reunification of Korea", as well as the text of this WCC Policy Statement and the background paper.
4. In view of the fact that Koreans have been made victims of a global Cold War, all efforts to halt the East-West confrontation and arms race will lighten the burden of the Korean dilemma. Churches everywhere must participate in the breaking down of enemy images and the ideological walls which divide both the world and Korea. The overcoming of hatred and hostility is not only a political task but also centrally a task of biblical and theological peace education.
5. Efforts should be made to determine at least the status of separated family members, and explore the possibility of communication. Caution must be exercised that such efforts always remain within the context of reunification for all Korean people. In the words of the "Message" of the International Christian Consultation on Justice and Peace in Korea at Incheon, "It is essential that efforts for the reunion of Korean families be responsibly inter-related among Koreans living inside and outside Korea, to ensure that these deeply emotional desires are not exploited for negative political ends."

V. There has been good progress in the struggle for peace and the reunification of Korea during the years since the Tozanso Consultation. It is a credit to the Korean churches and the solidarity shown by ecumenical partners that so many positive steps have been successfully taken. But there is yet a long way to go. The immense tragedy of the division of Korea is still little known. The disproportionate human cost paid by the Korean people for the Cold War and geopolitics is little known. The continuing agony of the separation of millions is little known. The potential for escalation of the conflict even to a nuclear conflagration is little known.

It is in highlighting these concerns for world-wide recognition that the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical community can make a unique contribution. The Korean division is in microcosm a symbol of the division of the world. If this wound in the human community can be healed, there would emanate from Korea a hope for all of humankind. We pray that the cross of the Korean people can lead to an Easter for us all.

## PREVIOUS ISSUES OF CCIA BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1980/No. 1 34th Session A Report on the United Nations General Assembly, from the U.N. Headquarters Liaison Office (English)
- 1980/No. 2 Iron Hand, Velvet Glove : Studies on Militarization in Five Critical Areas in the Philippines (out of print)
- 1980/No. 3 Arms Race in Europe : New Developments, Interview with Wolf von Baudissin (English, German)
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- 1988/No. 1 Perestroika — Some Preliminary Comments (English)





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